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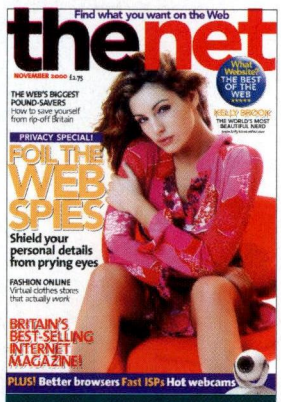

COVER PHOTOGRAPH: TIM BRET DAY/WWW.CELEBRITYPICTURES.CO.UK

You have a right to shop without being watched

You shop in your local superstore. As you leave, an imposing heavy blocks your way and demands details of the last five stores that you visited. Horrified, you demand to see the manager, and proceed to kick up a stink that they'll never forget.

Of course, you empathise entirely with the above scenario. Any right-thinking person (yes, OK, we'll include you) accepts that it's an outrageous invasion of privacy.

Yet every time you go online, you are being subjected to exactly that kind of invasion of privacy. Worse, it's often done without your knowledge – commercial sites can snatch your email address and spy on your surfing habits almost at will.

Now, as a magazine we are not in the business of arguing for online privacy at all costs – there are scumbags out there using the Internet for purposes that we'd rather were stopped now.

But equally, you have a right to shop without being spied upon. You also have the right to free expression. Sure, you can snigger at the hippyish connotations of that statement, but consider this: two of the biggest supporters of the right to online privacy are Amnesty International and The Samaritans.

The good news is that you can fight back. Begin with our guide on page 36 – it provides a range of simple adjustments you can make to your computer and browser that'll frustrate the hell out of those too impolite to even ask permission before they try to look...

Matthew Bingham, **Editor**
matthew.bingham@haynet.com

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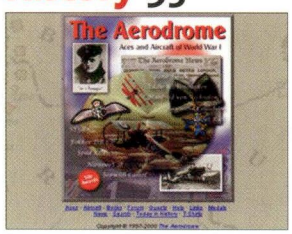

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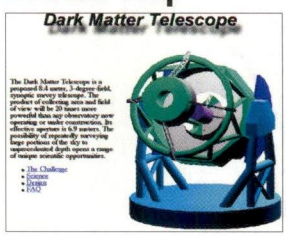

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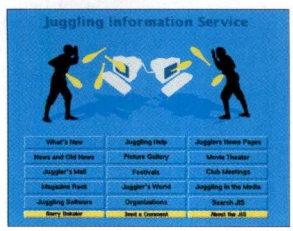

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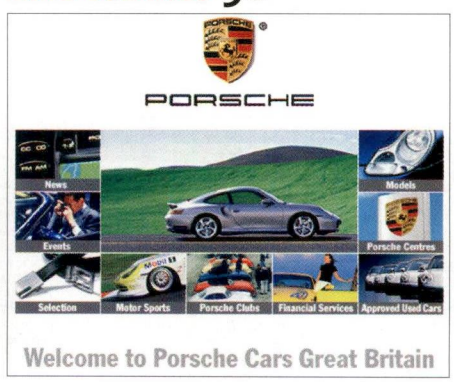

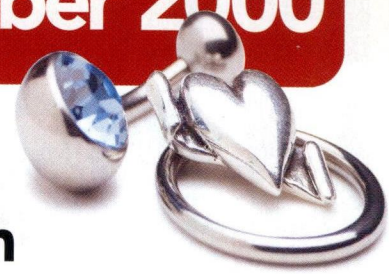

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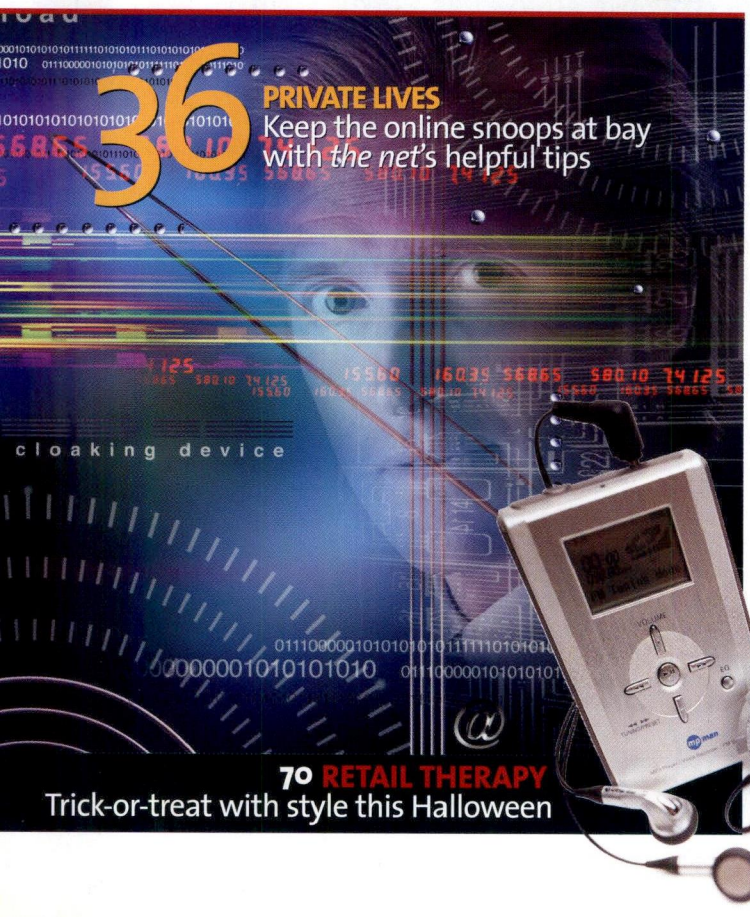

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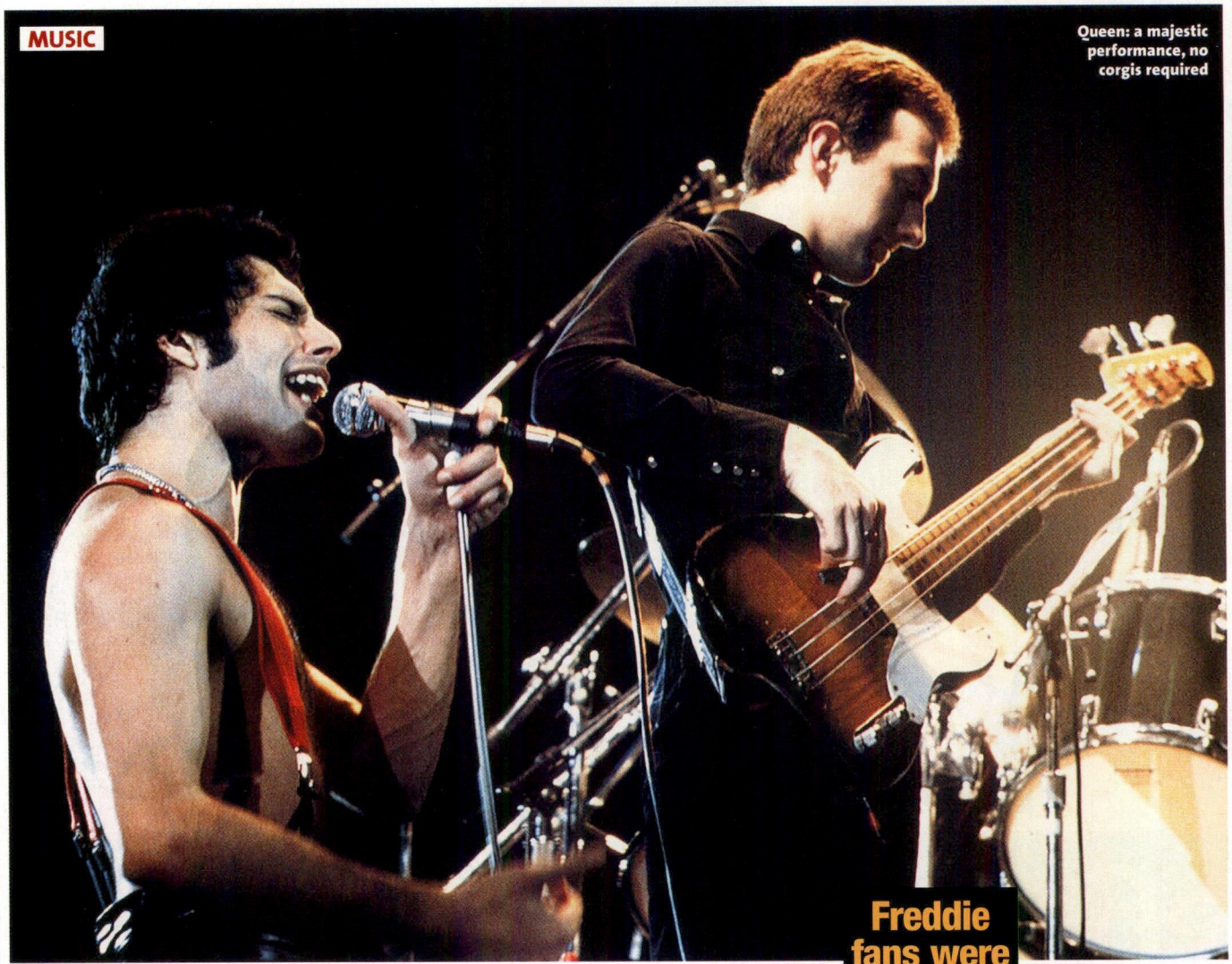


Queen: a majestic performance, no corgis required

Rock of ages finds new support on the Internet

Marillion raise album funds via email and Mercury rises once again

It's the news the Net community feared: fanatics have clubbed together via the Internet to fund a new assault on the world's sensibilities. Yep, Marillion are to release a new album – and it's all thanks to the Net.

After almost two decades in the music industry, the hairy rockers were dissatisfied with the record deals on the table. They approached their 30,000 fans via email from their site at ***www.marillion.com***; within three weeks the Marillimaniacs stumped up enough cash to cover the recording costs for the band's 12th studio album.

It's not the first time Marillion have used the Net to prolong their careers. Three years ago American fans underwrote a US tour to the tune of $60,000 after a Net donation campaign. Now the new album will be released in the spring on the band's own Liberty label and distributed by EMI.

Also distributed by EMI recently was a slew of Freddie Mercury songs – albeit unwittingly. The label is to release a box set called *Freddie Mercury: The Solo Collection* (all 128 tracks of it) later this month, and 27 tunes had been placed on an official site as a taster for the album. Sadly for them, whizz-kid Freddie fans were able to hack into the site, lift the songs and offer them elsewhere as free downloads.

Website menu: the Fish is off

Freddie fans were able to hack the songs and offer them for free

EMI staff laboured for hours over a hot PC moving the remaining tracks to a safe site, but they might have remained unawares if it hadn't been for the salt-of-the-earth Queen fans, who tipped off the company that the leak had occurred. 'It says much for the legion of fans that they alerted us to this Internet bootlegging,' simpered an EMI spokesperson.

Being the victim of 'Internet bootlegging' proved beneficial for Universal Music in the US when it won $118m in a court decision against MP3.com. Judge Jed Rakoff (honest) ruled that MP3.com's MyMP3 service 'wilfully violated' the huge conglomerate's copyright.

WORDS: GARY PARKINSON; PICTURES: RETNA

Police demanded a stool sample

KNOWHOW

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT...?

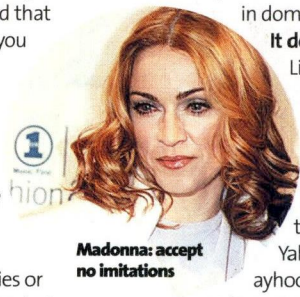
No.16: Cybersquatting

Enlighten me.
Cybersquatting is yet another of those Net-specific terms referring to the actions of someone who buys a domain name (such as the 'thenet-now' of www.thenetnow.co.uk) with the specific intent of selling it to a third party for a lot more money than they paid in the first place.

What's to stop them?
Nothing really. Domain names are given out on a 'first come, first served' basis. So if you register a common English word that someone else wants you are laughing. Hence the fact that business.com was sold for a staggering £4.6 million last year.

What's the issue here?
The problem comes when people register the names of celebrities or businesses. We told you last month about Sting losing the rights to sting.com, and Madonna recently swiped madonna.com off a bloke who'd used it as a porn site (he also has whitehouse.com). Although their names may be protected by trademark laws in the 'real' world, there is no strict legal procedure for ownership of domain names.

So what's happening about it?
In the past businesses and personalities just shelled out to buy the domain. Lately though businesses and celebs are taking their complaints to either the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) or the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) who usually rule in favour of the big wigs in domain name disputes.



Madonna: accept no imitations

It doesn't sound fair
Life isn't fair. What's more, businesses are now claiming not just their names, but also misspellings and anything with their name in it. Thus Yahoo now owns ayhoo.com,yahow.com, yahwoo.com, yyahoo.com and more, while NatWest have ownership of www.natwestsucks.com.

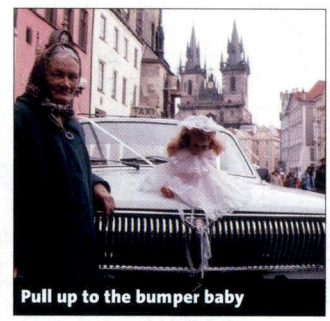
So what's going to happen?
There's no set legal structure, so at the moment it looks like we're stuck with the situation.

WEDDINGS

I'M GETTING MARRIED ON A MODEM

Can't decide which hat to wear for the wedding? Don't want to meet all the relatives? Ask the happy couple if they'd consider Webcasting the event, then you won't even have to leave the house.

It's a growing trend, as marked by the first English wedding to be Webcast from a council registery office. Psychiatric nurse Ravi Ram married Mamta Patel at Brent Town Hall. Brent broke new ground with the Webcasting facilities – available at ***wwwz.brent.gov.uk/webcam/registrar1.htm*** – for the good of couples with far-flung families. 'If your family can't get to the ceremony, they can see the wedding take place', explained a council spokesperson.



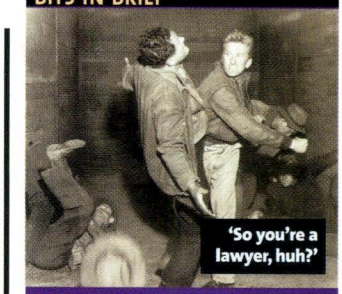
Pull up to the bumper baby

However, there will be some for whom a registry office isn't enough. Take the case of Riita Schaufert and Henning Muhra, who recently got married in the back of a Berlin taxi having set up a Webcam in the cab.

The registrar sat up front and conducted the ceremony while the couple exchanged vows in the back. The event was Webcast on ***www.berlin.de*** and the company claimed that 500,000 people logged on to watch. It's not recorded whether the driver added any extra charges.

News Bytes

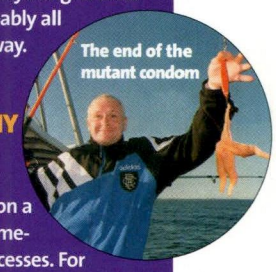
BITS IN BRIEF



'So you're a lawyer, huh?'

LOTTERY LAWYERS

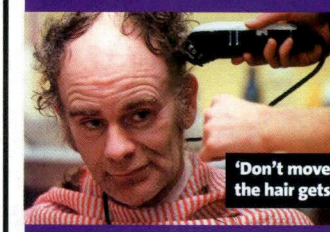
Suspicious that the bloke who runs the Lottery syndicate at work would run off with the jackpot? Someone not chipping in the cash every week? Desktop Lawyer (***www.desktoplawyer.co.uk***) has developed a National Lottery Syndicate Agreement. Not that the nation's gripped by paranoia post-Big Brother or anything. It costs a tenner – probably all you'd win anyway.



The end of the mutant condom

YOU SHALL HAVE A FISHY

Queues, forms, holding on the 'phone, sitting on a riverbank: all time-consuming processes. For the fishing fan there's only one choice, but as applying for fishing licences usually involves some or all of the other three, ardent anglers will be chuffed to learn that they can apply online at ***www.fishinglicence.co.uk***.



'Don't move or the hair gets it'

CHARITY SHOPS ONLINE

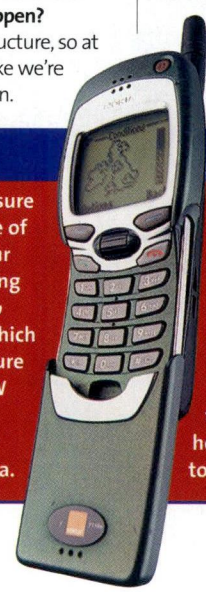
Not a fan of spending time leafing through grey shirts and Tony Bennett albums in musty charity shops? Maybe you'd prefer to try (***www.freezgive.co.uk***), where you can buy, say, the latest Harry Potter book for £7.50, of which six per cent goes to a good cause.

ISLAMIC INVESTMENT

Ever wanted to invest in a company but didn't know whether it was Islam-friendly? *Islamiqstocks.com* has screened four stock exchanges – London, New York, American and Nasdaq – to compile the Shari'ah Board, which advises Muslims on matters of financial import including the amount of Islamic permissible (Halal) equities.

WAP SHOTS Sites for sore ears

- After free Net access, prepare yourself for a wave of free WAP offers. First out of the blocks is Joe800 (***www.joe800.com***), a subscription-based service – 400 minutes per month for a tenner plus VAT or 800 minutes for £20 + VAT.
- Do the plates on that used car look like they've been hurriedly bolted on from elsewhere? Make sure the seller's not one of those dodgy Arthur Daley types by using HPI Check (***www.hpicheck.com***), with which WAP fans can ensure that the blue BMW hasn't got plates tea leafed from a clapped-out Cortina.
- Multimap.com, provider of online maps, has gone WAP – which is great if you can't find your way to the boozer. Actually there isn't yet a Pub Finder but there is a Store Finder in addition to the Travel Directions from here to there. Find your way to ***www.multimap.com***.



GAME BOY

Shake your money Quaker

Sujoy Roy earns £200k per year playing *Quake*. We tore him away from the screen for a chat

If you offered the average gamer a job playing *Quake III*, with yearly earnings of £200,000, most wouldn't resist. Professional gamer Sujoy Roy has that job.

A 24-year-old who plays games for a living might sound like a nightmare, but Sujoy has an interesting background: a Cambridge degree in physics, which landed him a job on Wall Street. So why did he leave?

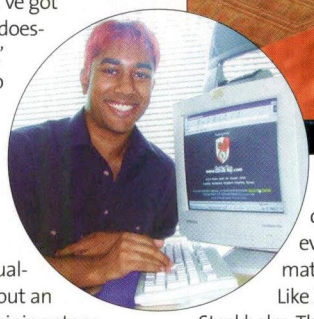
'I'd been playing for fun,' he explains, 'then I thought I might as well earn a living from it.'

'It doesn't matter if I lose, I've got sponsership'

At £ 200,000 per year, it's more than a living. How many tournaments do you have to win to earn that sort of wedge? 'I've won a lot in the past,' he says, 'but now I've got sponsorship, so it doesn't matter if I lose.'

Even so, to keep picking up gongs Sujoy must practise for hours each day, mustn't he? 'I don't play much any more,' reveals Sujoy. 'I usually only play for about an hour a day.' The training steps up as the tournaments near, however, to three hours per day.

Gaming's not unlike golf, explains Sujoy, in that there's a 'tour' of tournaments in which the top pros compete. And the newcomers get younger every year. Sujoy's team mate Xenon is only 17.



Sujoy and Xenon didn't always see eye to eye

Like Xenon, Sujoy lives in Stockholm. The Swedish capital is popular with gamers, who take advantage of top-notch Net access.

Bad connections irk Sujoy professionally because, while he might only spend an hour a day Quaking, 'I spend a lot more time doing other online work. I run an e-sport site, ***www.xsreality.com***, covering online gaming players like myself.'

Sujoy has a vested interest, then, in the online gaming market. And he's convinced that, as connections improve, human nature will drive the expansion. 'One of the instincts that people have is to compete,' he theorises, 'to try to win.'

Basil incurred the censors' wrath

CENSORING

'Cock' kicked out of site

Sticks and stones threaten to keep you off the Net

Censorship software has claimed yet another bizarre victim – a Los Angeles lawyer whose surname includes a dodgy word. Sherril Babcock was refused membership to the New York-based African-American Web site BlackPlanet.com by automated software, which labelled her surname 'unacceptable'.

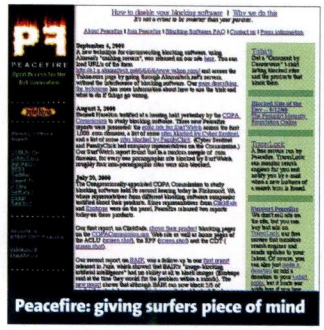
To make matters worse, a personal plea to the Webmaster to bypass the software was turned down, according to the cyber-rights group Digital Freedom Network (DFN) (*www.dfn.org/voices/americas/usa/blackplanet.htm*). DFN's Alan Brown was livid.

'Censorware doesn't block what it intends to'

'Censorware is a non-solution for a non-problem,' said an emphatic Brown. 'It doesn't block what it intends to and it blocks far too much of what it shouldn't,' and he continued on the subject: 'It's a failure and it's scary that some want public libraries to adopt this junk,' he finished.

It's not the first time censorware has failed to know its Arsenal from its elbow. AOL banned the word breast from its chatrooms, which hampered members of a breast cancer survivors' group. Another cyber-rights group, Peacefire (*www.peacefire.org*), even claims one version blocked access to the Vatican site.

And what became of poor Ms Babcock? She logged on under an alias... Babpenis. No word of a lie! While BlackPlanet.com's director, Omar Wasow, says the company will continue to use censorship software.



Peacefire: giving surfers piece of mind

PICTURES: BBC

There are now 13 characters every company should employ.

OneClickHR.com is the new website that takes care of all your people problems. Payroll, employment data, recruitment admin, reference and pre-employment health checks, psychometric assessments, time recording, contracts, employment law... and free advice and downloads galore. *Click on today* for the virtual HR department you simply can't afford to ignore.

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TW0900

While travelling on the information superhighway, have you ever felt the urge to really put your foot down?

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BTopenworld broadband. Go on, give it some.

BTopenworld, ADSL technology is here. This is the development that will have the greatest impact on the net in the forseeable future. It means you can get Internet service up to ten times faster than a conventional modem. You'll have an uninterrupted, high speed Internet access that's always on. Giving you access to BTopenworld's extensive content, a cost effective service for residential customers and small businesses. So the net can now be all the things it's always promised to be. All you've got to do is visit btopenworld.com and register. Blimey. Not exactly an option, is it?

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GERMANY

Shirking Germans go gaming crazy...

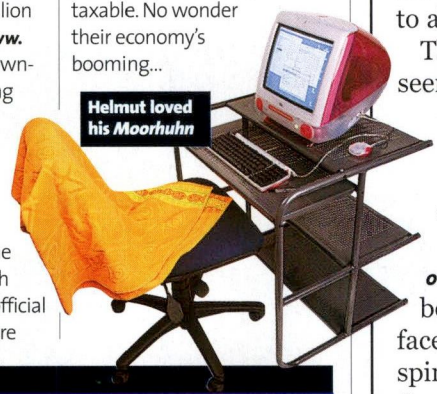
Moorhens bring working Berlin to its knees

The tabloid image of Germans as humourless automatons has taken a knock, thanks to the Net. It seems our Teutonic friends are just as likely as us to knock off work for a sly game – but the Government doesn't like it one bit.

The point was proven when an upgrade was released for *Moorhuhn*, a shooting game in which you blast moorhens. Almost a quarter of a million jammed the server at ***www.computerchannel.de*** to download *Moorhuhn 2*, crashing the system.

However, just as in every country, the shadow of The Boss lurks over work-shirkers. The new *Moorhuhn* game has a 'panic button' which hides the game behind official work, but a Berlin software firm has traitorously developed a programme which blocks the download of any such game.

If that wasn't bad enough, the German government is getting in on the act. According to the *Wall Street Journal Europe* (***www.wsj.com***), the Finance Ministry has declared personal surfing at work an 'extra benefit', making it taxable. No wonder their economy's booming...



Helmut loved his *Moorhuhn*

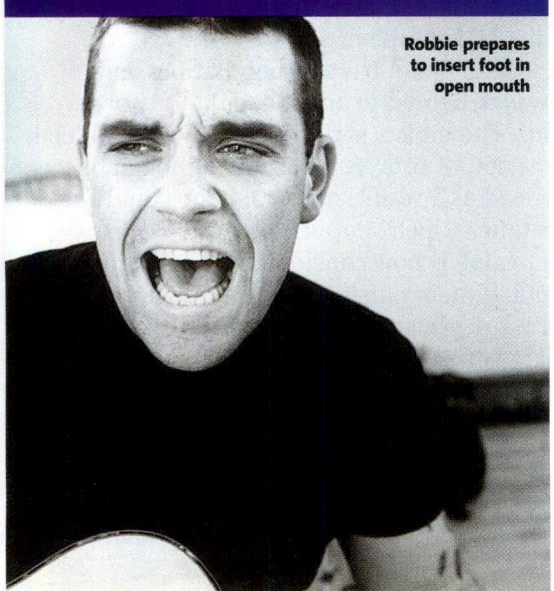
SPOKEN WORD

LOOK WHO'S TALKING...

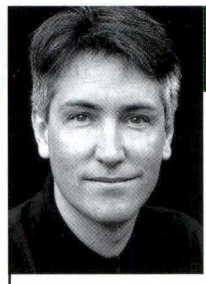
Odd quotes from celebs on the Web

This month: a Robbie Williams special, taken from a single Web chat at MSN.co.uk.

Is it true you have a tiger tattooed on your willy?
There's no room for it because of the giraffe.
Geri Halliwell: Did you?
What? Pleasure her orally?
What's the weirdest thing a fan has given you?
Herpes.
Could you have Gary Barlow in a fight?
He has a low centre of gravity and low self-esteem – two things that make a powerful combination.
What happened in St Tropez?
A man started talking to me in French and that just offended me. I was so drunk, I'd forgotten I was in France. It's mushroom season, let's just say that.
www.msn.co.uk/Page/11-385.asp



Robbie prepares to insert foot in open mouth



JON CASIMIR

WORLD SURFING CHAMPION

The Internet retailers who really need therapy

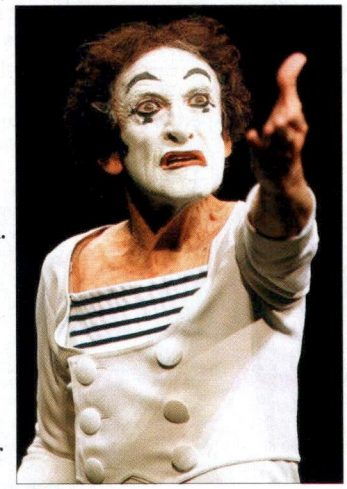
One of the things I love about the Web is the access it allows us to the often idiotic ideas of other people. Every oddball inventor now has a window to the world; and in this marketplace of increasingly bizarre ideas, it's becoming harder to tell the real from the hoax.

Take the Spankie™ (***www.spankie.com***): to put it delicately, it's a fluid-retention device for cyber-onanists, 'the world's first comfortable, washable sleeve that fits over Mr Happy to absorb the mess and keep you clean when 'playing alone'.'

The Spankie™ has all the hallmarks of a prank, but it seems to be above board. Me, I like the mental double-takes these sites force upon us.

Here are some other favourites; sites that could be hoaxes but turn out to be real.

Oddball inventors now have a window to the world



Mimeistry (***www.mimeistry.org***): This Californian couple believes soundless, painted-face acting is the key to Christian spiritual growth. 'And now, Jesus walking against the wind...'

The Patriot Matchmaker Newsletter (***home.inreach.com/dov/patriot.htm***): In between moaning about the New World Order and stockpiling guns, the American militias are looking for no-non-sense chicks with untainted DNA.

Porn Origami (***underground.zork.net***): Erotic folded paper objects, complete with diagrams.

A Woman's Guide To How To Pee Standing Up (***www.restrooms.org/standing.html***): The promise is simple – 'No more hovering over filthy toilet seats.' The reality is harder and may require some practice.

Guidelines For The Euthanasia Of Domestic Animals By The Use Of Firearms (***www.rcmp-learning.org/docs/ecdd1058.htm***): The easiest and most efficient way to ice the family pet.

Neuticles (***www.neuticles.com***): So you finally had Fido spayed; now he's nutless and feeling kinda sissy. Fret not – Neuticles sells testicular implants for cats, dogs, horses and bulls.

Household Rubber Gloves (***www.geocities.com/SouthBeach/Boardwalk/7271***): What did fetishists do before the Web? Not the latex-loving, S&M-obsessed, normal cabinet-minister types, but the people whose peculiarities seem so singular that it's hard to imagine they ever found anyone to share them with. This is a site for the blokes who feel the need for a Spankie™ every time they see a woman doing the dishes.

PICTURES: CHRIS RENNIE, RETNA, PA

Q&A

DAFT AS A BRUSH

Debonair fox Basil's back in the spotlight

TV ICON BASIL BRUSH IS soon to be back on our tellies with a new sitcom, *Foxed*. Excuse enough for *the net* to grab an exclusive interview with the legend.

When did you first start to use the Internet?
Actually I invented it, in 1965. I plugged a TV into a telephone and a sandwich toaster and instantly started receiving rumours about the new *Star Wars* film.

What's the best thing about it?
I'm on it.

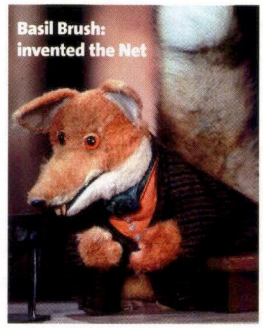
Do you get many emails, especially from fans?
So many that my PC threatens to go Boom! Boom!

'I'm the same witty fox I always was'

Do you worry that people will stalk you over the Net?
As Oscar Wilde said, the only thing worse than being stalked about is not being stalked about.

You've registered Basil.net. What can we expect to see?
Oooh – all kinds of crazy, wild bonkers stuff that'll blow your mind.

How quickly can you type?
I can do 75 words per minute. Unfortunately, none of them make any sense.

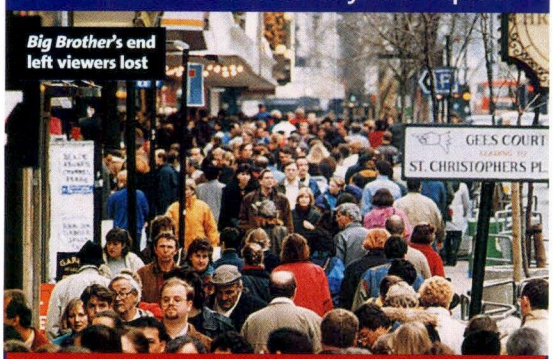

Basil Brush: invented the Net

Are you going to use the Net to revive your career?
I shall use every means at my disposal – bribery, blackmail, begging and pleading...

Is the new Basil different?
I'm the same handsome, debonair, witty, clever and modest fox I always was.

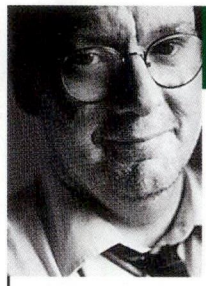
Finally, what are your favourite Web sites?
www.jellybabies.co.uk
www.hatedogs.net
www.virtualtailors@savillerow.co.uk
www.rottenoldjokes.net

STAT ATTACK Factoids for you to repeat



- One in eight office workers find inability to access the work PC for a day more stressful than being left by their partner, according to ICL (*www.icl.co.uk*).
- Britons are twice as likely to buy entertainment or sports tickets online as their Americans and German counterparts, claims the Nationwide (*www.nationwide.co.uk*).
- Only 10 percent of grandparents are 'silver surfers' – but those that are love to book holidays online, says Lloyds TSB at *www. lloydstsb.co.uk*.
- During the 10 weeks following its launch, Desktop Lawyer (*www.desktoplawyer.co.uk*) provided six percent of the UK's divorce petitions.

PICTURES: REX FEATURES/KOBAL/BBC



PAUL SIMPSON

THE MODEM THINKER

An uplifting experience with drugs via the Net

Scored some drugs on the Internet the other day. Nothing illegal mind, just some Viagra. It was (trust me on this) a purely academic exercise. I had stumbled across a Web site which sold drugs which would improve your sex life and restore your hair. There was a medical questionnaire to fill in which, I assumed, was to ensure that the drugs you could buy at the click of a button wouldn't damage your health.

The only risk I was aware of with Viagra was that, as the site itself warns on its info page, men with serious heart conditions should think twice before taking it. Not because they might suffer the ultimate coitus interruptus but because the drug does affect blood pressure. So I informed the site that I had had a triple heart bypass and was suffering from angina for which I was still taking medication.

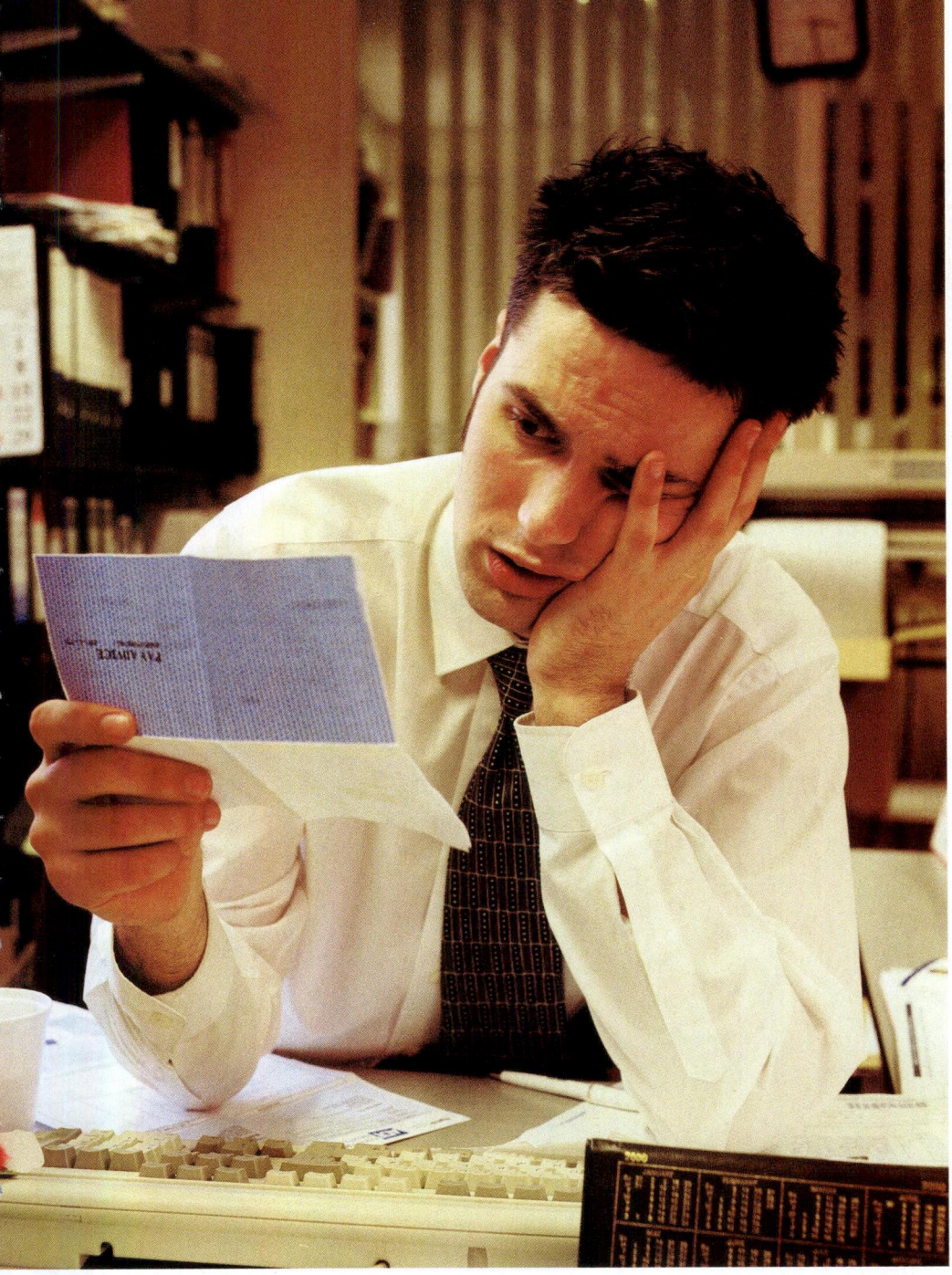
Sid loved matron's steam bath

Viagra's street value is now higher than heroin

I then clicked on a button to order, expecting to receive an email which confirmed that, alas, due to the nature of my condition, I wouldn't be sold the drugs.

Silly me. I got a gleeful email trumpeting that the online drugs emporium was delighted to announce that my order had been successful. The tablets arrived in a jiffy and, indeed, in a jiffy bag. I have not, of course, taken any although, if I did and fell down dead as a result, my legal heirs could sue the pants off the e-tailer which supplied them.

As Viagra's street value is now considerably higher than heroin, I will be selling them outside the local nightclub on a Friday night. I'll ask eager punters if they've had a triple heart bypass and are suffering from angina and, unlike the site I bought them from, if the answer to either of these questions is 'yes', I won't sell them any.



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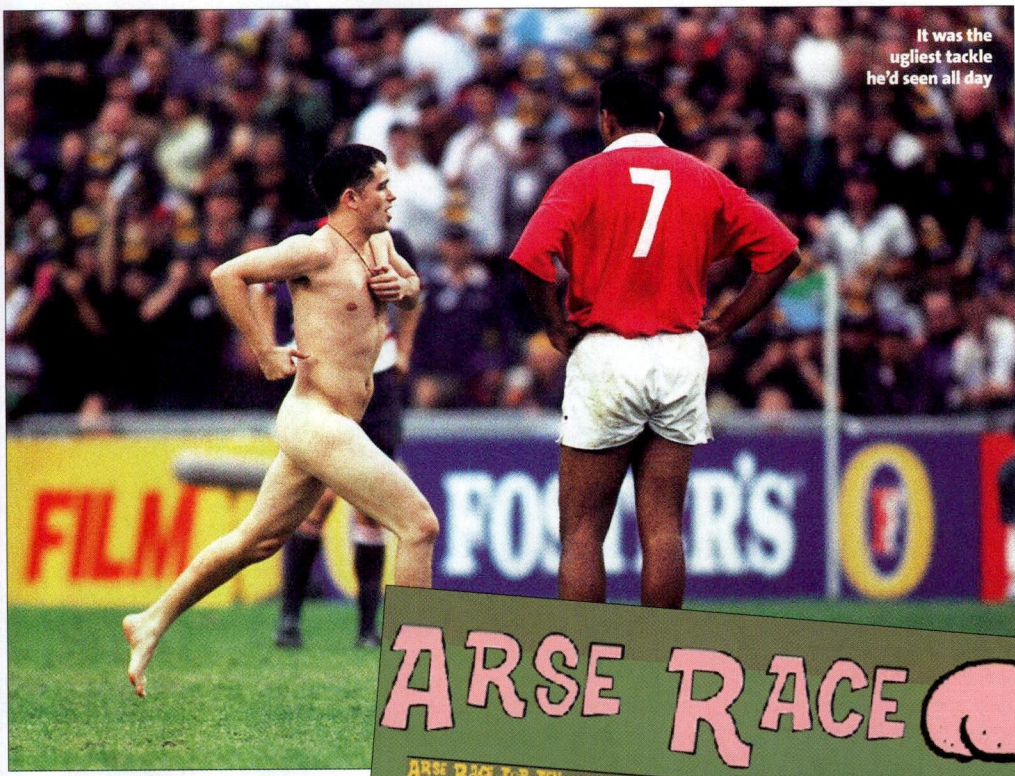
THE BEST, THE WORST AND THE DAFTEST STUFF ON THE WEB

HEROES & ZEROS



It was the ugliest tackle he'd seen all day

Latest scores, blow by blow

BET YOUR BOTTOM DOLLAR

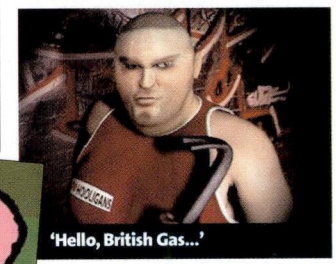
You just can't beat a day at the races – checking out the form, discussing which ground your horse likes to run on and keeping an eye on the odds. Of course, if you haven't got money of your own to spend, then it's not as much fun – unless you're watching arse racing instead of horse racing.

They are exactly the same, except the competitors are all arses as opposed to equine thoroughbreds. That's arses as in backsides, derrieres, bums and the like. They have names like Brown Thunder and Lil Guffer, and you need some careful consideration of the form and odds before deciding what you're going to place your money on. When you've made your bet the race begins, and you can either give your arse a whipping ('ooer!' – innuendo) or feed it beans in an attempt to improve its performance during a race. You're given a few quid to start with and the challenge is to make as much money as possible from the meet at Royal Arsecot. Great fun!

BEST SCANDAL GENERATOR

DO YOU WANT SOME?

IF YOU WANT TO CREATE A GAME that's different from those already on the market, you should make something based on current faves and give it a scandalous twist. That must be the thinking behind *Hooligans – Storm Over Europe*, a game in which you lead football hooligans through Europe, kicking seven bells out of everyone you come across. It might be in bad taste, but it's sure to get press coverage. ***www.hooligans-thegame.com***



'Hello, British Gas...'

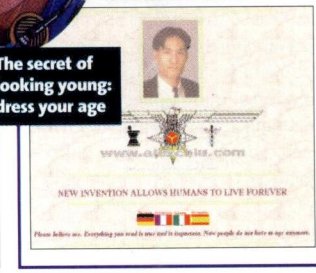
BIGGEST NUTTER

YOU AND I ARE GONNA LIVE FOREVA

Unless you're Connor MacLeod from the film *Highlander*, your years on this earth are finite and, until somebody discovers the secret to immortality, that's the way it will stay. Of course, there's bound to be some fruitcake who thinks he's found just that, and Alex Chiu is that fruitcake. Chiu claims to have invented an Immortality device. Rating himself among such luminaries as Albert Einstein, he claims that all you need is a few of rings on your fingers and you'll never age.

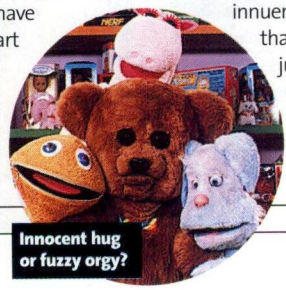
'Please believe me. Everything you read is true!,' he cries, like a sad, desperate man who knows he's about to be shunned by right-thinking people. If he's so convinced, how come some more people haven't come out in support? ***www.alexchiu.com***

The secret of looking young: dress your age



BEST INNUENDO Colourful language

'UP ABOVE THE STREETS AND houses, *Rainbow*'s flying high...' Bring back memories? If you're in the twenty-something generation, *Rainbow* will have been an integral part of your childhood, and George, Bungle and Zippy are like old friends. But are the characters as clean cut as we are led to believe? Amongst a veritable treasure trove of sound files on our fave *Rainbow* site is an innuendo-packed dialogue that appealed to the juvenile part of our nature. There are references to Jane, Rod and Roger banging away all night, more than a passing mention of Jane's pair of maracas and our animal friends discussing the delights of playing with their twangers. If you have a sense of humour as puerile as ours, the ruderainbow2 sound file is an essential addition to your collection of Net goodies. ***www.widdy.demon.co.uk/rainbow/main.htm***


Innocent hug or fuzzy orgy?

PICTURES: EMPICS, REX

thenetnow THIS MONTH

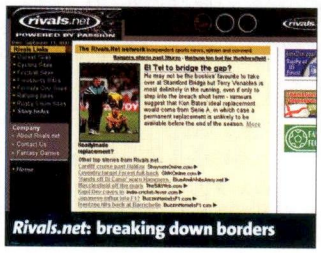
WEBSITES | MOVIES | DVD | MUSIC | GAMES

WEBSITES

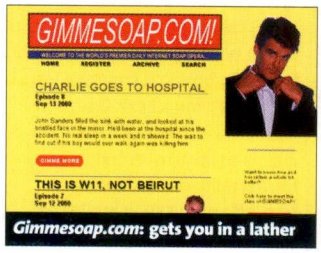
Soap before a clean getaway

Online drama, sports rivalry and holiday planning

Outside the confines of mental hospitals, there's nothing more fanatical than a footy nutter. And far from frothing at the mouth, there are eloquent and intelligent writers who can wax lyrical about the beautiful game. That's the support system behind (***www.rivals.net***), a network of more than 300 sports Web sites, each of which is edited by an independent fan. It's based on



Rivals.net: breaking down borders



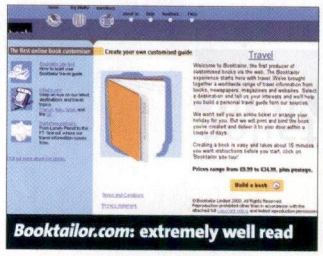
Gimmesoap.com: gets you in a lather

the similar US-based Rivals.com, which has registered a billion page impressions in a year and has been crowned by Neilson NetRatings as the stickiest site – but that's barely a surprise given the loyalty of fanhood.

We're not out to draw divisions between the sexes but there does seem to be a definite gender split between sport and soap. So the other half of the population would be pleased to learn of Gimmesoap! (***www.gimmesoap.com***), an email soap which plops on to your desktop at midnight each night – meaning you get to read it at work each morning. Based in London yet going for the Dynasty angle with two feuding families weighed down with money, success and beauty, you can even see pictures of the action at the Gimmesoap site.

Alternatively you could get away from it all. Then again, even planning a trip is fraught with angst. You need a guidebook to find your way around, but they all blather and waffle about a wide range of topics when you're only interested in either the culture or the clubs. Now you can delete as appropriate with Book Tailor (***www.booktailor.com***), which allows you to choose from categories like food, art, entertainment, history, language and politics for a variety of locations. A real book made to your specifications will be delivered within five days, spelling an end to the days of juggling books, sunglasses and camera.

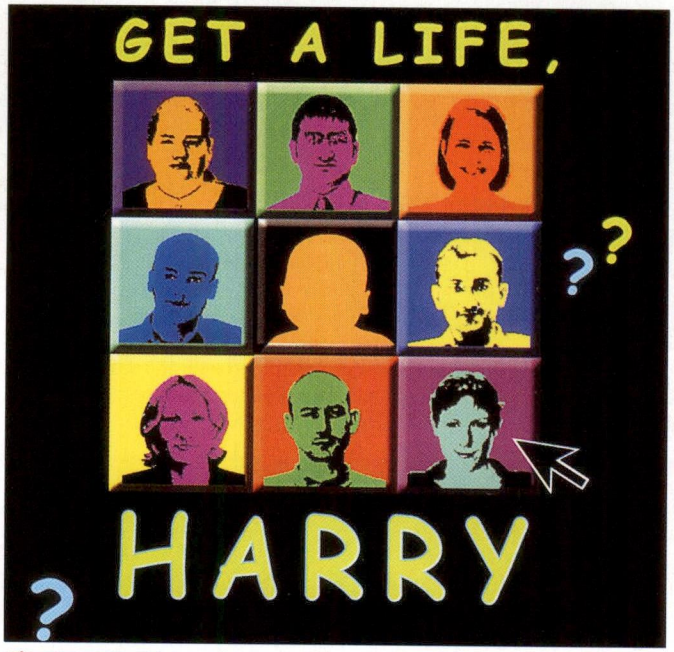
If you're thinking of a permanent move but you can't afford to buy a house, you'll probably be well aware



Booktailor.com: extremely well read

Flatmatesonline.co.uk: home help

of the flat-sharing market. Indeed, you may have watched Channel 4's *Flatmates* with a knowledgeable grin. Now the show (***www.flatmatesonline.co.uk***) will help you find a dream flat with, erm, other like-minded individuals by filling out a questionnaire. Then again, if you're advertising a room for rent, you can sit back *Shallow Grave*-style and judge your prospective lodgers...



IT'S YOUR MOVIE **Interactive is an oft-bandied word, but it truly applies when the audience constantly decides how the next section will progress. That's how it is at *itsyourmovie.com*, which launched earlier this year and is already on its second production – Get A Life, Harry – in which you can choose the main protagonist's mood, dislikes, tastes and sexual orientation. The weekly updates, bolstered by background info and contests, will give viewers the chance to win bit parts. But don't be fooled into thinking this is an amateur operation: far from it, with *The Full Monty* writer Simon Beaufoy on board.**

TOP VIDEO RENTALS

1 The Green Mile
2 The Beach
3 Double Jeopardy
4 The Insider
5 The Hurricane
www.blockbuster.co.uk

MOST POPULAR EMAIL ADDRESSES

1 @bigbrotherseesall.co.uk
2 @bringbacknick.co.uk
3 @007.co.uk
4 @sexonthebeach.co.uk
5 @behappy.co.uk
www.another.com

BESTSELLING DVDS

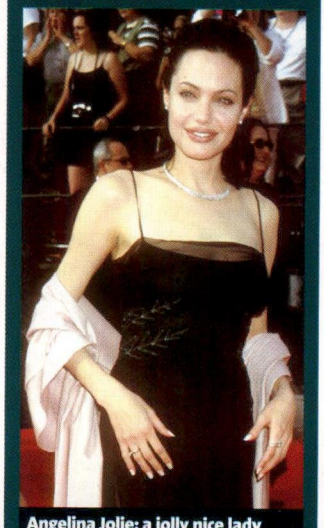
1 The World is Not Enough special edition
2 The Matrix
3 The Sixth Sense
4 The Mummy
5 Blade
www.dvdstreet.co.uk

TOP PHONE TONE TUNES

1 Travis – Coming Around
2 Robbie Williams – Rock DJ
3 The Corrs – Breathless
4 Eagle Eye Cherry – Are You Still Having Fun?
5 Santana – Maria, Maria
www.iobox.com

TOP IMDB NAME SEARCHES

1 Alec Guinness
2 Piper Perabo
3 Angelina Jolie
4 Hugh Jackman
5 Keanu Reeves



Angelina Jolie: a jolly nice lady

WEBSITE WORDS: GARY PARKINSON; PICTURES: KOBAL COLLECTION, ONLINE USA

Brosnan grabs a notable scalp

Danny Graydon throws popcorn at the latest films

Nutty Professor 2 – The Klumps ★★★★

Eddie Murphy, Janet Jackson

This sequel is a formidable and hilarious showcase of Murphy's uncanny mimicry talents. Despite the stilted story, Murphy convinces in no less than eight roles, bolstered by amazing make-up effects. Hamster sex and a horny granny will keep the gross-out fans happy, but Murphy is at full comedy strength with this.

www.klumps.com *Packed site, worth it for the 'Granny Screenmate'.*

Dinosaur ★★★

Voices of DB Sweeney, Julianna Margulies

With its trumpeted 'all CGI' visuals, *Dinosaur* certainly raises the bar in terms of animation, but it would have been so much better if it wasn't shackled by Disney's cute chains. With their human values, the beasts (not known for sentimentality) are robbed of their power. However, for a visual kick, this is hard to beat.

disney.go.com/disneypictures/dinosaur/dinomain.html *Excellent Making Of section – many interactive elements.*

The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle ★★★★

Robert De Niro, Rene Russo

Displaying an enormous sense of fun, this version of the 60s cartoon mixes live-action with animation and is showered in puns, sight gags and in-jokes as our heroes have to foil a world domination plot by Fearless Leader (a wonderful De Niro). With its dedication to providing a good time, this will attract all-comers.

www.rockyandbullwinkle.com *Much fun, packed to the brim with goodies.*

What Lies Beneath ★★★

Harrison Ford, Michelle Pfeiffer

Lacking the punch of *The Sixth Sense*, this ghost story has dependable turns from its two leads, but is ultimately let down by confusion and absurdity (and a trailer that gives it all away). Pfeiffer gets the meatier role, while Ford is simply required to be gruff and no-nonsense. Not a bad try, all the same.

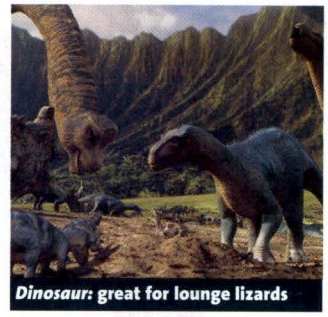
www.spielberg-dreamworks.com/ *Downloads aplenty from a sanctioned fan site.*

Gun Shy ★

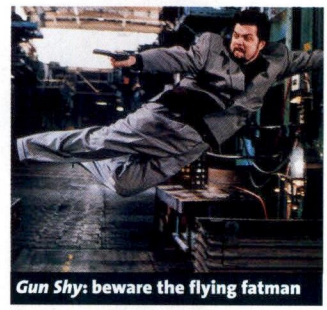
Liam Neeson, Sandra Bullock

Despite good intentions, this is crippled by its inability to decide whether it's a quirky rom-com or a quirky Mafia flick. Liam Neeson is the DEA agent with major job anxieties. Bullock (who produced) is utterly wasted as the free-spirited shrink. A perfect example of why stars should not produce films.

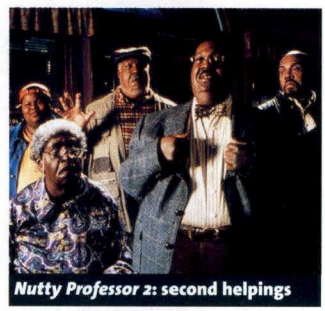
studio.go.com/movies/gunshy/index.html *Unfortunately as shambolic and dithery as the film.*



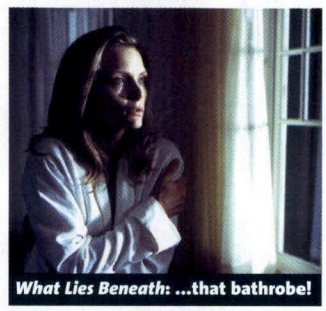
Dinosaur: **great for lounge lizards**



Gun Shy: **beware the flying fatman**



Nutty Professor 2: **second helpings**



What Lies Beneath: **...that bathrobe!**

Romeo Must Die

Jet Li, Aaliyah ★

Only related to Romeo and Juliet in as much as children of sworn enemies fall in love, this will please fans of Hong Kong action flicks and the martial arts talents of Jet Li. Plot? Creaky. Script? Oh dear.

www.romeomustdie.net/ *Flashy site, with hip music and good film info*

Road Trip

Breckin Meyer, Amy Smart ★★

Clearly an *American Pie* wannabe, *Road Trip's* drive to be dirty is forever undermined by a good-natured streak. The contrived plot – New York student accidentally sends amateur porn video to girlfriend in Texas, so friends 'help' get it back – is too stale.

www.roadtrip-itsgood.com *Trailers, biographies and soundtrack.*

Loser

Jason Biggs, Mena Suvari ★★

The geek-loves-girl-who-loves-someone-else story is prime territory for director Amy Heckerling (*Clueless*), but this is a by-the-numbers affair doomed by its staunch refusal to cater for the gross-out needs of its target audience.

www.spe.sony.com/movies/loser/ *Informative, but strangely boring site.*

The House of Mirth

Gillian Anderson, Eric Stolz

★★★★★

Exceptional melodrama which favours a strong emotional core over a lavish look. Anderson is assured post *X-Files* glory with a superlative performance. As a disgraced social butterfly, she is supported by a strong cast (Laura Linney, Stolz, Dan Aykroyd) and a heart-rending story.

gaws.ao.net/hom *Simple and informative site.*

MOVIE OF THE MONTH

Grey Owl ★★★★★

Pierce Brosnan, Stewart Bick

Beautiful, alluring and natural without being overblown, Dickie Attenborough's (true) story of Archie Belaney – the Englishman who joined the cause of the Iroquoi Indians – is captivating. Brosnan continues to grow beyond Bond, his Grey Owl giving dignity and grace to this fascinating figure. Anne Galipeau provides able support as his Indian wife, Pony. Lush cinematography complements the natural feel and Attenborough's passionate and epic storytelling.

www.mcs.net/~klast/www/grey_owl.html *An excellent resource to complement the film, filled with articles.*

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

MUSIC ALBUM OF THE MONTH

From rags to Ritchie's

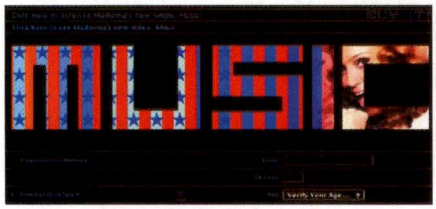
Sam Upton turns the Radio off and worships the Madonna

Madonna

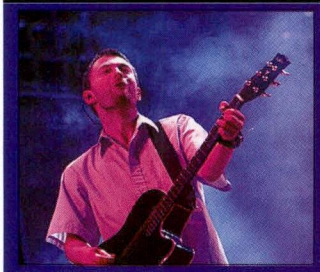
Music **MAVERICK/WEA** ★★★★★

Seemingly better known of late as *Snatch* director Guy Ritchie's partner than as a music icon, now would be a good time for Madonna to reclaim her identity. And, with her eighth studio album, she's managed to do just that. Central to its success is French producer Mirwais, who's injected a healthy amount of Gaelic funk into Madonna's disco-pop equation. She may have mistakenly tagged her cover of *American Pie* onto the end, but even that cannot spoil what is one of the great albums of 2000. If you're still unsure, remember that you can always turn it off.

www.madonnamusic.com *Official album site in which you can download a free remix of Music (the single), mix your own versions of album tracks online and even get a real-time message from Madge herself.*



MUSIC NEW RELEASES



Radiohead

Kid A **PARLOPHONE** ★★★

It's no understatement to suggest that Radiohead's fourth album has a high degree of anticipation around it; and where there's anticipation there's often disappointment. *Kid A*, unfortunately, supports that theory. With almost no electric guitars and a tendency towards the free form jazz of Miles Davis, this is a confusing beast which will confound more than delight most fans.

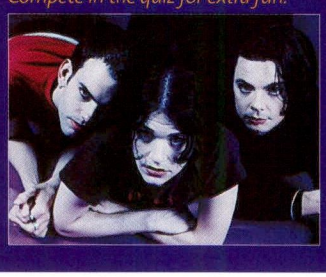
www.radiohead.co.uk *A fittingly bleak site with each member making his own unique contributions.*

Placebo

Black Market Music **HUT** ★★★

That Brian Molko's a strange one. A year ago, the Gothic sex-dwarf would have drank anything, taken anything and shagged anything. But now he appears to have developed a social conscience, with tracks like *Haemoglobin* (their version of Billie Holiday's racial prejudice protest song *Strange Fruit*) and rap song *Spite & Malice*. Truly shocking for all the wrong reasons.

www.placeboworld.co.uk *Pleasantly titled The Brick Shithouse, Placebo's homepage is both astoundingly comprehensive and entertaining. Compete in the quiz for extra fun.*



Teenage Fanclub

Howdy! **COLUMBIA** ★★★★

A welcome return for the Scottish country folksters, without whom Travis would still have been languishing in Caledonian obscurity. Taking their cue, as always, from The Beach Boys, songs like *I Need Direction* and *Straight & Narrow* are an undiluted delight; with each of the four member's songs (they provided four each) never letting up in quality. Mainstream success could finally be coming their way.

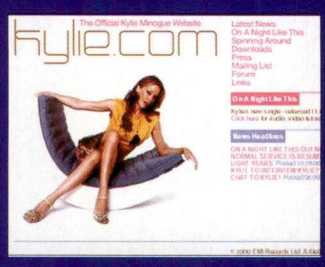
www.teenagefanclub.com *A nice site with plenty of scenic pictures, the odd video and a few audio samples.*

Kylie Minogue

Light Years **PARLOPHONE** ★★★★

Kylie's been many things in her time: pop icon, disco queen, indie temptress – and now gay icon, with *Light Years* proving to be her highest of Hi-NRG albums. She's always had one eye on the lucrative gay scene of course, but with this she's gone full speed ahead for the pink vote. And remarkably great it is too – pure disco abandon with no hint of contrivance or irony. Beat that Billie!

www.kylie.com *A visual treat for every Kylie fan, with the all-important downloadable screen-saver proving its main selling point.*



PICTURES: RETNA

MUSIC Q&A

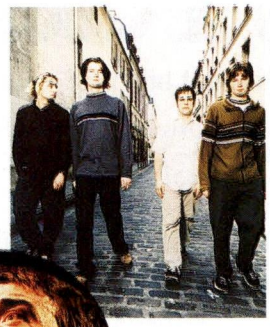
SLAVES TO THE WAGE

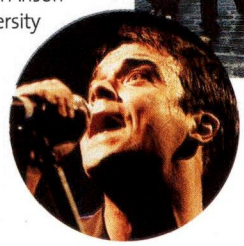
Placebo singer Brian Molko admits his problem with sharing

What are you up to right now?
We're putting the finishing touches to our new single *Slave To The Wage* and trying to recover from the Leeds and Reading festivals. I think the new songs went down really well when we played, which is a great relief considering the crowd hadn't heard them before. Well, those that haven't got the Internet hadn't anyway.
Do you use the Internet much?
I'm afraid I haven't got a computer at the moment. I'm going to wait until I move into my new flat to get one. When I did, I spent a lot of time on our own Web site, which we've enjoyed watching grow over the months. A while ago we found the best fansite and made it the official Placebo site, and employed the guy doing it. He was a very happy boy.
Do you contribute much to your own site?
Yeah, we try to answer as many fans' questions as possible. It's difficult being out of the country so much, but we really do try as much as possible to keep it updated and stay in contact.
Where do you stand on the Napster debate?
I think that people have this incredibly romantic idea of what artists should be like, and don't realise that we are like other people and have responsibilities. I just don't see why, as an artist, you should be expected to work for free and give away the fruits of your labour for nothing when no one else does. The problem is that, if people don't want to support their favourite bands by buying their records, their favourite bands won't be able to function anymore. A lot of people will probably stop making music and that's really unfortunate.

GIG GUIDE

Summer's over and the chill's setting in, so warm your ears with the following.... All dates are for October, unless otherwise stated





THE BLUETONES
13 Hull University **14** Oxford Brookes University **15** Warwick University **17** Liverpool University **18** Lancaster Sugarhouse **19** Glasgow Barrowlands **21** Newcastle University **22** Sheffield University **25** Leicester De Montfort University **26** Northampton Roadmenders **27** Bristol Anson Rooms **29** Cardiff University **30** Brighton Centre **31** Cambridge Junction **2 November** Ipswich Corn Exchange **3 November** London Shepherd's Bush Empire

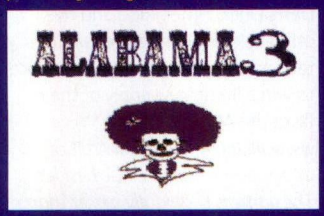
ROBBIE WILLIAMS
9, 10, 12 & **13** Birmingham NEC **16, 17** Glasgow SECC **20, 21** Newcastle Telewest Arena **23, 24, 26** & **27** Manchester Evening News Arena **31, November 1, 2, 4 & 5** London Docklands Arena

TOPLOADER
8 Sheffield Foundry **9** Lancaster Sugarhouse **11** Liverpool University **12** Leicester De Montfort University **14** Manchester University **15** Leeds University **16** Eastbourne Floral Hall **17** Norwich UEA **19** London Shepherd's Bush Empire **21** Wolverhampton Wulfrun Hall **22** Cardiff University **24** Oxford Brookes University **25** Bristol University **27** Portsmouth Pyramid Centre

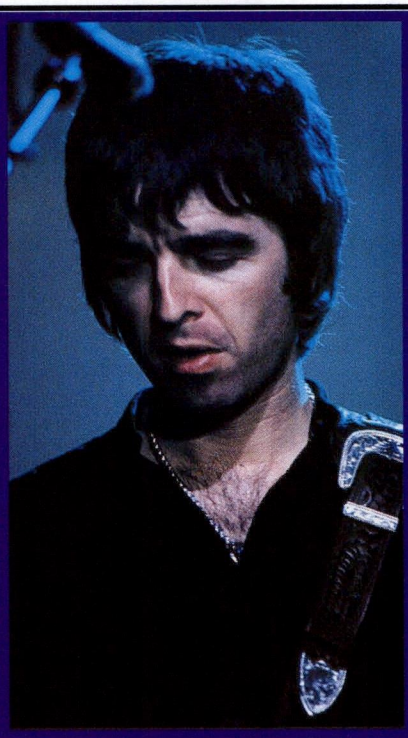
PLACEBO
31 London Brixton Academy

EMBRACE
25 Dublin Olympia **26** Belfast Limelight **28** Swansea University **29** Norwich UEA **30** Southampton Guildhall **31** Folkestone Leas Cliff Hall **5** & **12 November** Glasgow Barrowlands **10 November** London Brixton Academy

Alabama 3
La Peste **ELEMENTAL** ★★★
Chances are, you'll already be familiar with this South London acid-country collective, whose *Woke Up This Morning* has been used in the opening sequence of the US Mafia drama *The Sopranos*. But soundtracking isn't all they're capable of – here they've whipped up a fine fusion of Hank Williams and techno. You shouldn't argue with these people – they're very well connected.
www.elemental.music.co.uk/alabama3/index.htm
Cheerily strange site with numerous essays and pieces of art explaining the magic of Alabama 3. Oh, plus a picture of a large, tattooed cock.



Tailgunner
Tailgunner **NO LABEL**
★★★★
Unremarkable but for the fact that their drummer happens to be the beleaguered Noel Gallagher, Tailgunner are led from the front by Mark Coyle, the co-producer of Oasis' *Definitely Maybe*. Dirty blues is Coyle's particular bag as he attempts to emulate the raw power of Neil Young's backing band Crazy Horse, with thuggish guitar and an underproduced stripped-down sound. Which is all rather good and, given Oasis' current situation, probably a better hope for the future than Noel's other band.
www.tailgunner.net *Like the band, the site is still finding its feet. But with audio samples and Tailgunner news, it's all the budding Oasis side project fan would want.*



Godspeed You Black Emperor!
Levez Vos Skinny Fists Comme Antennas To Heaven **KRANKY**
★★★★
Godspeed... rarely give interviews, almost never do pictures and, with a strange distribution policy, make it difficult to find their records. But don't let that put you off: the Montreal instrumental collective produce some of the most affecting music you're ever likely to hear. This album may be a tad daunting, but their blend of classical and post-rock is a wondrous thing.
www.southern.com/southern/band/GDSPD *A riot of information.*

GAMES

Secret agent strikes a Cord

Action, adventure, excitement and blistered thumbs

MTV Sports Skateboarding (various platforms) ★★★★

Talk about doing the rounds: this little speed freak of a game is available on PC, Dreamcast, PlayStation and even the diminutive GameBoy Colour. You can skate around wearing ridiculously long shorts and oh-so-cool T-shirts, and throw all kinds of wicked – see, we're down with the kids – tricks. There are 60 possible moves, although you'd need to get some real height to do them all in one jump. Great graphics and music from the likes of the Deftones and Cypress Hill.

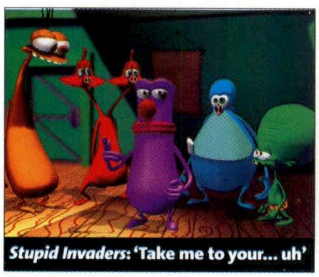
mtvsports.thq.com/skateboarding/ *This site gives you the low-down on the game in typical snazzy MTV-style.*

Medal Of Honour Underground (PlayStation) ★★★★

If you played the original *Medal Of Honour* on the PlayStation then you've probably already ordered this sequel to the WW2 adventure. The suffix '*Underground*' gives you some idea of what to expect – no, not the Wombles, the Resistance. We accompany the young Manon – Control from the first game – and guide her through a treacherous journey from disaffected youth to veteran insurgent. The graphics are typically top-notch, but it's the storyline that wins the day.

Vive La Resistance!

moh.ea.com/mohu/ *The official site is basic, but oh boy what a game. The* Saving Private Ryan *of the PlayStation.*



***Stupid Invaders*: 'Take me to your... uh'**

Crimson Skies (PC) ★★★★★

All too often flight sims focus too much on the reality and not enough on the fun. Microsoft has been guilty of this with its painfully realistic *Flight Simulator* series, but it has made amends with *Crimson Skies*. The focus here is on the art of the dogfight and not the physics of flight, so you'll be more concerned with taking the foe out than worrying about letting your flaps in. You can also play online at the MSN Gaming Zone.

microsoft.com/games/crimsonskies/ *Microsoft does the business with goodies to download and loads of great content.*

Metal Gear Solid (PC) ★★★★★

And about bloody time, too. Solid Snake spent far too long languishing on the poorly pixelated PlayStation, before making the move on to the PC. With its vastly superior graphics capability and processing power, the home computer is the perfect platform for this thrilling game, where stealth and tactics win out over brute force and firepower. It was a hit on Sony's console, but it's better on the PC.

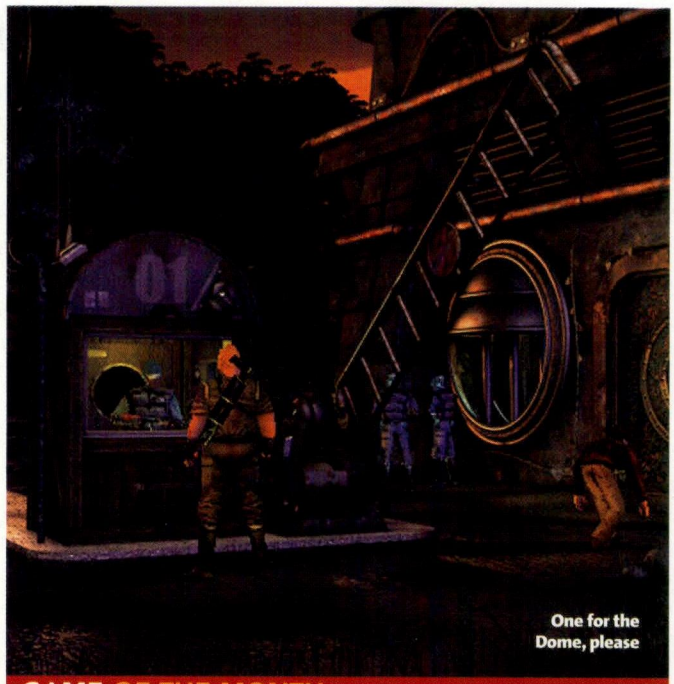
www.metalgear.com/ *Flash-enabled site with more information on the game than you could want.*

***Crimson Skies*: brown underwear**

Stupid Invaders (PC) ★★★★★

A spaceship lands on Earth containing five aliens. But these are no ordinary ETs; these are *Stupid Invaders*. Our none-too-bright heroes inhabit a fantastically multicoloured universe in this – and we hesitate to use this word but we've no choice – zany adventure. The high-resolution graphics are stunning and the highly stylised 3D environments breathtaking. The 120 locations and 50 bizarre characters you'll meet make for engaging long-term point-and-click action.

www.stupid-invaders.com *A great Shockwave-based Web site where you really get a taste of the game.*



One for the Dome, please

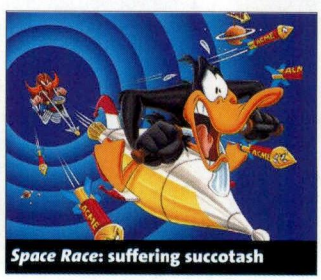
GAME OF THE MONTH

In Cold Blood (PC) ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

The name's Cord, John Cord. You play as the man himself, a secret agent on the trail of an American colleague, missing in action in a small but dangerous country located on the borders of China and the former Soviet Union. The game unfolds and keeps you hanging on like a good spy movie – it will annoy, frustrate, confuse, but always entertain. An espionage thriller with fantastic production values and great visuals, *In Cold Blood* takes you back to the days when the story was king in adventure games, but retains all the trappings the modern gamer demands.

www.ubisoft.co.uk *Not the greatest Web site on the Net, but it does have information on this and other Ubi-Soft titles.*

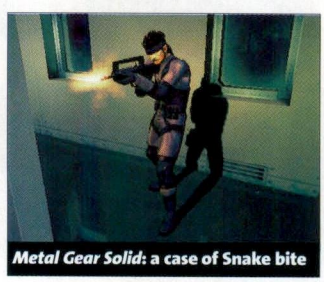


***Space Race*: suffering succotash**

The World Is Not Enough (N64) ★★★★★

Bond is back on the N64, and after the unprecedented success of the *GoldenEye* game, *The World Is Not Enough* has a lot to live up to. Luckily for Nintendo, the game does the business. The first-person mission is as good as you'd expect from the official Bond sequel, but once again it's with the frantic four-player action where this game scores big. This should be the festive favourite among N64 fans, so make sure you get your orders in early. It'll leave you shaken and stirred.

www.007.ea.com/ *From the throaty 'Welcome Commander' greeting you know this is going to be a top site – if only all gaming sites were this good*

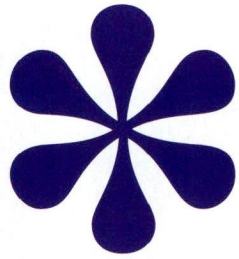


***Metal Gear Solid*: a case of Snake bite**

Space Race (Dreamcast) ★★★

In what appears to be a blatant attempt by the Dreamcast software developers to steal the pre-teen market from Nintendo, *Space Race* attempts to out-cute the N64 – and it doesn't do a bad job either. But instead of the moronic Mario Brothers or dreadful Disney it's Loony Tunes-tastic as Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Elmer Fudd and five other colourful cartoon characters take part in a race across, well, space, to win a lifetime's supply of their favourite ACME product.

www.uk.infogrames.com *A bit of information and little else besides. The game is thankfully better than the Web site.*



An ad with no 'small print'.

Do you want total freedom and peace of mind to surf the World Wide Web? For just **£19.99** a month you can log on to the Internet any time day or night.

When we offer you **unmetered internet access** we mean it.

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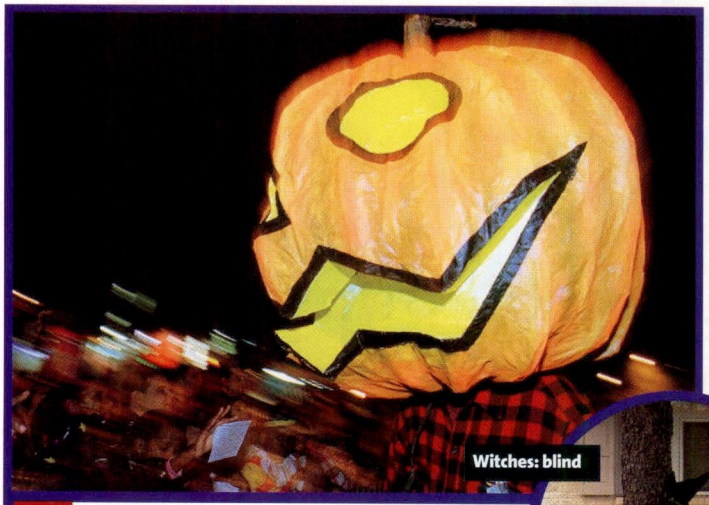
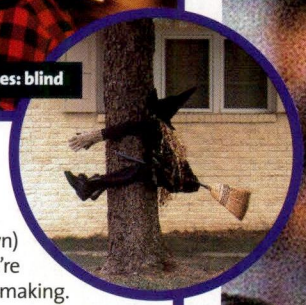
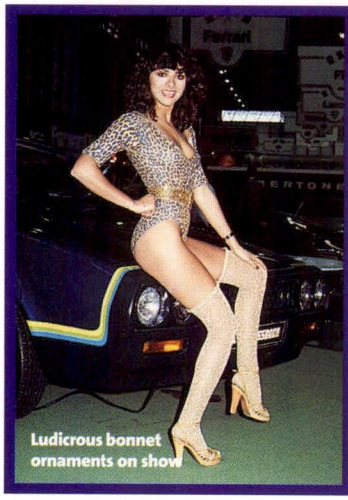



Witches: blind

31 Halloween

TUE **Spooky holiday, 31 October**

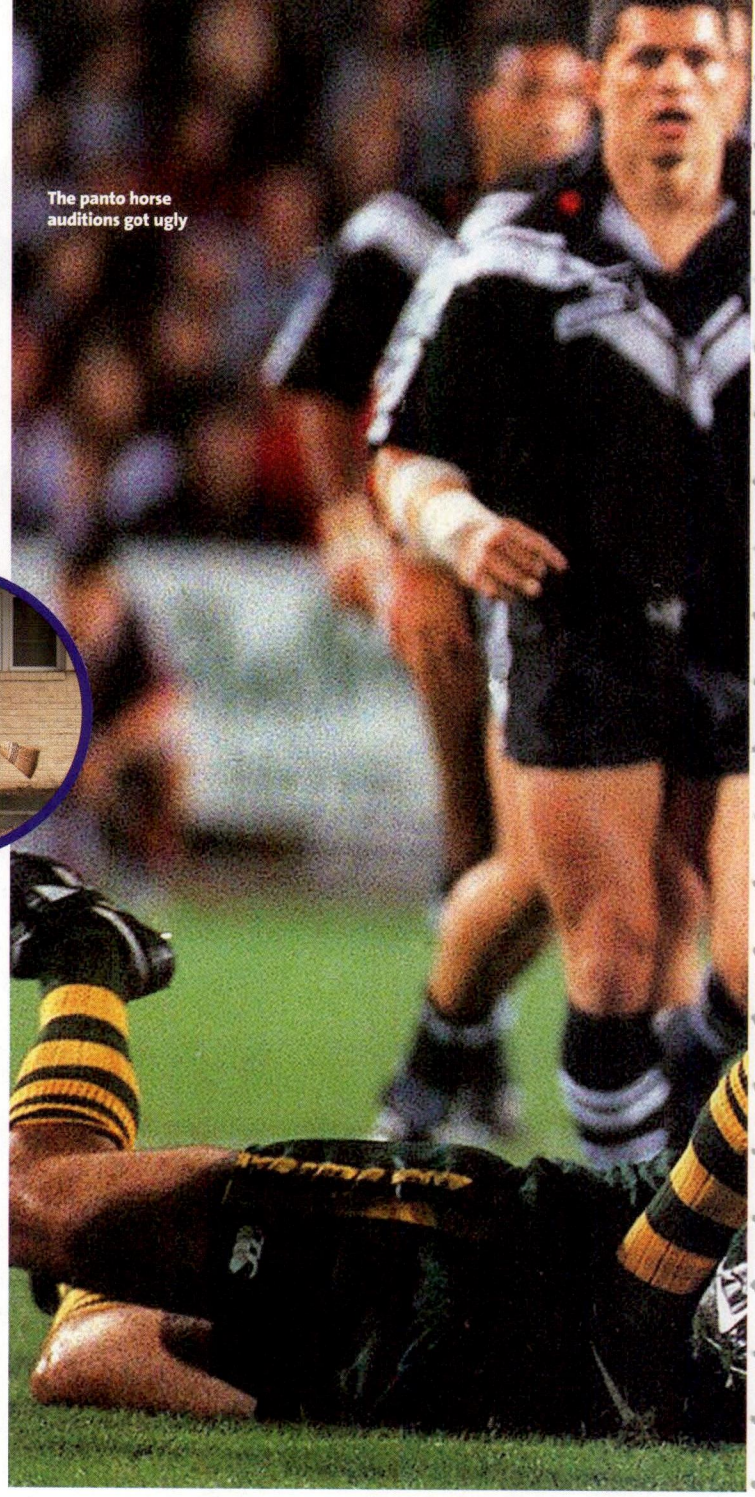
Before it came to symbolise sweets or Michael Myers, Halloween (or Samhain – 'summer's end' – as it was known) was a day for pagans to celebrate the end of summer (we're talkin' 4000 BC here) with song, dance and general merrymaking. Then the world's first party-poopers, the Christians, came and nicked the day, renaming it 'All Hallows Eve' and using it as a time to honour saints. Now, how much fun is that? ***ratsz.com/halloween/halloween_history.htm***


Ludicrous bonnet ornaments on show

19 Motorshow

THU **British International Motor Show, NEC Birmingham, 19-29 Oct**

Three-quarters of a million visitors are expected at this year's show, and they'll have plenty to ogle at, not least is the debut of the new Mini. And they'll be plenty for non-Mini fans to swoon over as well, with BMW, Peugeot and Trident all showing off new wares. There's over 1,000 models on display, so there's sure to be something to please everyone. For starry-eyed visitors, a collection of 'dream car' drawings by celebs (such as Ronan Keating) will be featured in the Star Studio. ***www.motorshow.co.uk***


The panto horse auditions got ugly

OCTOBER 4th – NOVEMBER 2nd

OCT 4 WEDNESDAY — MOBO Awards ***www.blackmusicarchive.co.uk***
Alicia Silverstone, 24 ***www.silverstone.org***

5 THUR — Leeds International Film Festival ***www.leedsfilm.com***
Kate Winslet, 25 ***www.kate-winslet.org***

6 FRI — Elisabeth Shue, 37 ***www.elisabeth-shue.com***
Kennedy urges Americans to build bomb shelters in 1969 ***www.jfklancer.com***

7 SAT — Thom Yorke, 32 ***www.radiohead.co.uk***
1966 World Cup reunion cruise ***www.worldcuparchive.com***

8 SUN — World Chess Championships ***www.worldfide.com***
The BBC Peoples' Awards ***www.bbc.co.uk/peoplesawards***

14 SAT — Ralph Lauren, 61 ***www.polo.com***
Shaznay Lewis, 25 ***www.allsaints.ukmix.net***

15 SUN — Andy Cole, 29 ***www.manutd.com***
I Love Lucy premieres in the USA in 1951 ***www.geocities.com/Hollywood/1694/lucy.htm***

16 MON — World Food Day ***www.fao.org/wfd/wfd2000-e.htm***
Sheffield International Documentary Festival ***www.shef.ac.uk/city***

17 TUES — Eminem, 26 ***www.eminem.com***
Mother Teresa awarded Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 ***www.gargaro.com/mother_teresa***

18 WED — Jean-Claude Van Damme, 40 ***www.buisiness.fortunecity.com/laur/895***
Walt Disney's *Jungle Book* released, 1967 ***www.disney.com***

24 TUE — Caravan Show, Earl's Court ***www.caravanclub.co.uk***
'Black Thursday' stock market crash, 1029 ***www.uksharenet.co.uk***

25 WED — The Gem (Pro-Celebrity) Golf Challenge ***www.gemgolf.co.uk***
First electronic watch goes on sale in 1960 ***www.topbrands.net***

26 THUR — Football FA forms in 1863 ***www.the-fa.org***
First tour of Alcatraz in 1972 ***www.nps.gov/alcatraz***

27 FRI — Vanessa-Mae, 22 ***www.vanessamae.com***
John Cleese, 61 ***www.comedyzone.beeb.com/fawltytowers***

28 SAT — Bill Gates, 45 ***www.microsoft.com***

28 SAT Play the ball

Rugby League World Cup 2000, 28 Oct–25 Nov

Thuds and groans will echo around Europe this month as the 10th World Cup swings into action. Holders Australia are again the overwhelming favourites, with New Zealand second, helped considerably by the Great Britain team being split into its constituent parts. England play Australia at Twickenham on the opening day, with Ireland – who have Scotland in their pool – also in action against Samoa in Belfast. Wales' pool includes the New Zealanders. The odds are tough, but maybe one of the home sides can make the final at Old Trafford. ***www.worldcup.rleague.com***

9 MON John Lennon born, 1940 ***www.lifemag.com/life/thebeatles*** Elvis and Pricilla Presley divorce in 1973 ***www.elvis-presley.com***	**10** TUES National TV Awards ***www.itv.co.uk*** Chris Tarrant, 54 ***www.whowantstobeamillionaire.co.uk***	**11** WED UK Internet Summit 2000 ***www.open.gov.uk*** Bobby Charlton, 67 ***www.int-foot-fame.com/hof/charlton.asp***	**12** THUR The Jimi Hendrix Experience was formed in 1968 ***www.jimi-hendrix.com*** Margaret Thatcher, 75 ***www.iron-lady.com***	**13** FRI Raindance Film Festival ***www.raindance.co.uk*** White House cornerstone laid in 1792 ***www.whitehouse.gov***
19 THUR Pantene Pro-V Beauty Awards ***www.uk.pantene.com*** British Video Association Awards ***www.bva.org.uk***	**20** FRI Dannii Minogue, 29 ***www.dannii.com*** Tom Petty, 47 ***www.tompetty.com***	 Carrie Fisher, 44 ***www.starwars.com*** French women gain right to vote in 1945 ***www.ipu.org/wmn-e/suffrage.htm***	**22** SUN BUPA Great North Run ***www.greatnorthrun.co.uk*** Worlds first parachute jump in 1797 ***www.bpa.org.uk***	**23** MON Michael Crichton, 58 ***www.chricton-official.com*** Walt Disney's *Dumbo* was released in 1941 ***www.disneymania.org/dumbi.htm***
29 SUN Winona Ryder, 29 ***www.moviething.com/bios/winonaryder/*** Sir Walter Raleigh executed 1618 ***www.luminarium.org/renlit/raleight.htm***	**30** MON Diego Maradona ***www.diegomaradona.com*** Orson Welles broadcasts *War of the Worlds* in 1938 ***www.war-of-the-worlds.org***	**31** TUE Jimmy Saville, 74 ***freespace.virgin.net/thos.man/guest/guest.htm*** John Keats born, 1795 ***www.john-keats.com***	**NOV 1** WEDNESDAY Swim for Life Gold Swim Challenge ***www.sta.co.uk*** Jenny McCarthy, 28 ***www.mtv.com/mtv/tubescan/jenny/***	**2** THUR k.d. lang, 39 ***www.kdlang.com*** Burt Lancaster born, 1913 ***www.home.earthlink.net/~bonnies1***

WORDS: SIMON CRISP; PICTURES: EMPICS, NEWSMAKERS, ONLINE USA, REX FEATURES

egg: insure

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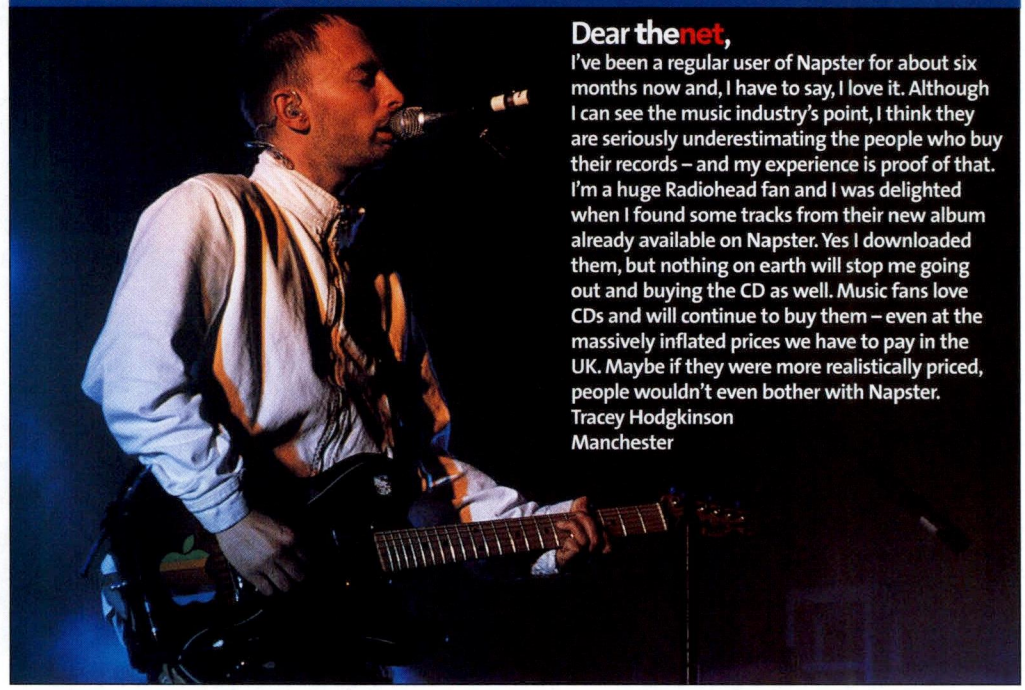
Dear thenet,

I read a story on your Web site a while ago about a site in America which was inviting people to bid for petrol at the price they would like to pay and which station they would like to buy it from. You weren't guaranteed that price but, if your bid was accepted, it was a great way to reduce your fuel bill. There are two points I would like to raise. Firstly, what planet do the Yanks think they're on if they think they're paying too much for petrol? More importantly, it amazed me that some bright spark didn't think of this when the British fuel crisis hit us. Imagine the scene – an independent petrol station owner has enough petrol left to fill five cars. Rather than sell it on a first come, first served basis, he saves it until the rest of the country runs out and then puts it up on QXL for auction. He'd make a fortune! Now that's making the most of the Net.

David Barrett
Lancashire

READER'S LETTER OF THE MONTH



Dear thenet,

I've been a regular user of Napster for about six months now and, I have to say, I love it. Although I can see the music industry's point, I think they are seriously underestimating the people who buy their records – and my experience is proof of that. I'm a huge Radiohead fan and I was delighted when I found some tracks from their new album already available on Napster. Yes I downloaded them, but nothing on earth will stop me going out and buying the CD as well. Music fans love CDs and will continue to buy them – even at the massively inflated prices we have to pay in the UK. Maybe if they were more realistically priced, people wouldn't even bother with Napster.
Tracey Hodgkinson
Manchester

Dear thenet,

I enjoyed your round-up of WAP in the last issue. I didn't really know much about it until I read it, but now I've taken the plunge and used WAP a couple of times on my new handset and it can be quite useful. It's also changed my perceptions of people's addictions to their phones. Now when I see people staring intently at their phones for half an hour, I give them the benefit of the doubt. Before I used to think they were a sad case waiting for it to ring, now I assume they are using WAP.

More to the point, those who doubt WAP are missing its real quality. If people are logged on to the Net on their phones it means they'll miss any incoming calls, so we don't have to listen to their annoying conversations!

Pierre Brook
London

MAIL MONKEY Lets it all hang out

From: **mailmonkey@chimp.co.uk**
Sent: Wednesday September 16, 2000
To: tony@blair.gov.uk
Subject: Having a hard time?

Dear Tony,

Seeing as you still haven't replied to my letter of several months ago, I thought I'd try again. It's understandable I suppose – you've been a bit busy.

First there was that petrol thing. There are alternatives to petrol, you know. The stuff I drink down the Monkey Bar on a Saturday evening is rocket fuel and I reckon you could keep a fleet going on it.

I thought I saw you in a party political broadcast the other day. Turned out it was actually a rerun of *Batman*, but you do share an uncanny similarity with The Joker – must be the smile. It was definitely you I saw harping on about giving a billion quid to develop the Internet the other day though, wasn't it? It's all very well taking the government online, but what about the real issues? How about developing a keyboard for monkeys to use? I keep getting my fur stuck in the little gaps. There's enough monkeys in your government, so they must have the same problem. Talking of monkeys in government, my old mate Cuddles reckons he's a sure thing for a post in your next cabinet.

You're not having much luck with the Dome either, are you? I see the people who were going to buy it have pulled out. You must be mortified, and I know the feeling. You plough loads of money into a project and it falls through – but I prefer not to think about the night I tried to get Cameron Diaz drunk.

Anyway, I've got a feeling your re-election campaign could be suffering and I'm the man to help. Thatcher would never have got back if I hadn't have offended General Galtieri's wife, thereby inciting him to invade the Falklands. And King Louie would never have made it to be King of the Swingers if it wasn't for my help.

Remember, it's a jungle out there, and that's my territory.

Yours democratically.

Mail Monkey

www.cameron-diaz.com

www.dome-tickets.com

www.labour.org.uk

www.number-10.gov.uk

Dear thenet,

Thanks to the dulcet advertising tones of John Peel, I decided to have ntl's digital phone and TV cable service fitted last June.

The biggest lure was ntl's promise of 'no Internet call charges and no ISP charges either' on the company's ntlworld service. Surprise, surprise, more than a quarter of a year later I'm still waiting for the registration CD while paying out telephone charges for my surf time.

ntl's Web site offers apologies for the delay, but I wasn't told that there was such a backlog when I first enquired about signing on with them, specifically mentioning I was interested in signing on with ntl as my service provider.

First AltaVista made a hash of its free Internet access offer and now ntl is following suit. There seems to be a lot of promises made to get Internet users signed up to companies who then don't deliver.

Lestyn Young
Cardiff

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PICTURE: RETNA

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COLD FEET
The inside story on the hit TV show's Web site

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PICTURE: CORBIS

thenet December issue on sale Wednesday November 8

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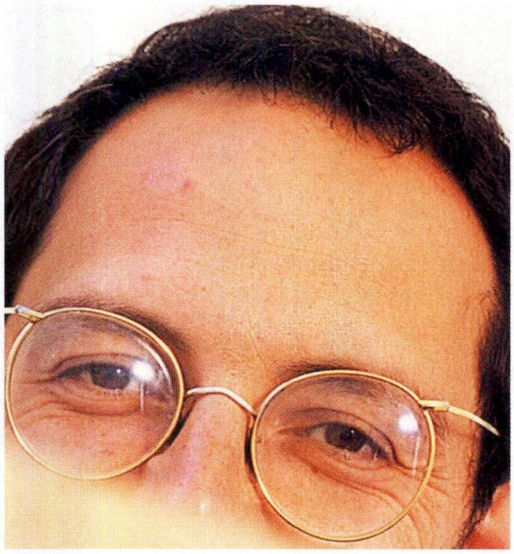
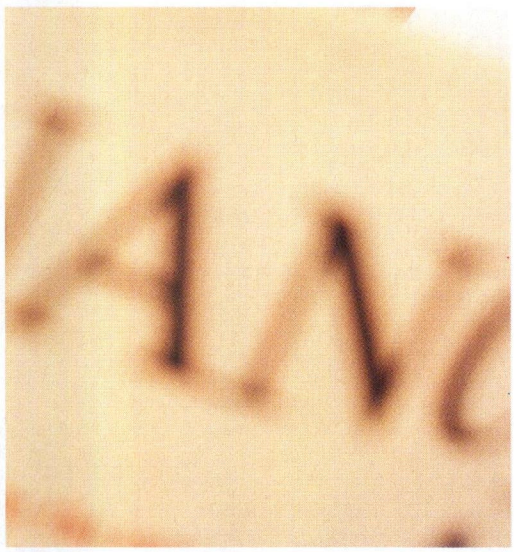
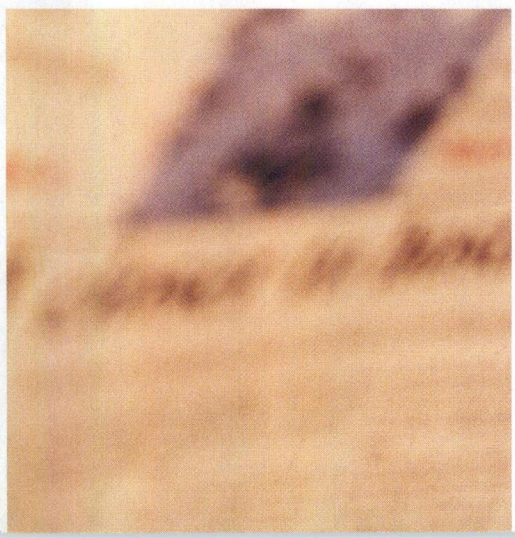
No16 THE MOTLEY FOOL UK www.fool.co.uk







Shakespeare's plays might be stuffed with kings and princes, but the Bard invariably put his wisest words into the mouths of fools – jesters who dare to speak the truth. It's a tradition upheld by David Berger, who runs The Motley Fool's European operations. 'Most of the financial industry is geared towards selling high-charging, underperforming products designed for the benefit of the industry, not the consumer – think of pensions mis-selling and endowment mortgages. But not us, we're investors writing for investors; we don't want to flog anything.'

The Motley Fool started life in 1994 as a US stocks and shares newsletter, until founder David Gardner discovered a small Web operation. He used it to put his Foolish philosophy – 'educate, amuse, enrich' – online, then bought shares in the outfit. That company was AOL, and is one of the reasons why Gardner's personal portfolio has grown by 50 percent a year ever since.

By 1996, Gardner was ready to spread the Foolish word to Britain. He recruited David Berger, then working as a doctor in North Devon and writing for the US site, who planned to run the business in his spare time with the help of an assistant. The staff were asked to look out for anyone sending email from a '.co.uk' address, and managed to come up with one person – Bruce Jackson, an Australian accountant living in London. 'I'd only ever made one post about one bombed-out stock I held: Rainforest Café, down $16 to $3,' Bruce recalls.

He's now Managing Editor of the UK site and, until recently, showed the same nose for a hot stock by running the Qualiport – the site's own share portfolio which is performing considerably worse than the FTSE100. 'We've put £22,000 of our own money into the Qualiport,' Bruce explains. 'You can't get any more realistic than that. We've got rules, too: after we announce a buy, we have to wait five days until we actually purchase it, in case we affected the share price. It's educational; I've learned from the mistakes I've made.'

So, have the ups and downs of the Internet economy left the Foolish model – take the time to research, search for solidly-performing companies – looking out-of-date?

'The market is weird at the moment, but it probably always is,' says David. 'The market has its own type of weirdness.'

So what else makes The Motley Fool different from any other financial site?

There's accessible advice on everything – from share dealing to tax planning, with an emphasis on how the average punter can do as well as the professional financial advisor. But register as a Fool and you get into the meat of the site: the messageboards – there's one for just about every share. Any fool can send a message, but the real kudos comes from fellow community members adding their recommendation to your musings, allowing you to add stars after your name.

'The beauty of the system is that it's a meritocracy,' explains David. 'We've got one Fool, 'Hallucigenia', who registered with us in March and has already posted 700 messages with close to 1,000 recommendations. He's a molecular biologist and really worth listening to. He's got immense credibility.'

'And we don't even have to patrol the messageboards,' adds Bruce. 'If someone sends a 'problem post', they get jumped on by the community. We're getting over 2,000 posts a day, and weeks have gone by without any ramping [people 'talking up' shares they intend to sell] or problems at all. It's a virtuous circle.'

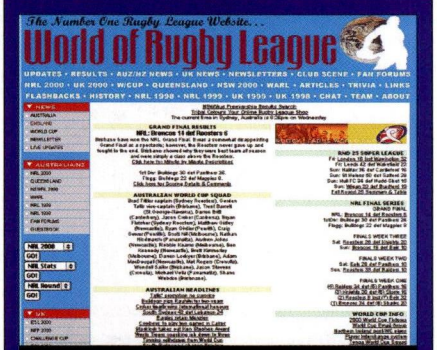
Just as David and Bruce were recruited through the messageboards, so they continue to trawl them for new talent. 'Almost every one of our writers has come through the boards,' says Bruce. 'It's like they're doing an audition for you.'

These writers are being put to good use – the Fool is expanding. A German version is about to launch, as is a Japanese site, and there's already a range of Foolish paperbacks in bookstores. Meanwhile, this summer, 3,000 people paid up to £20 for a three-month interactive course via email. 'Education is the main reason for our site's existence,' explains Bruce.

They're even taking the word to the streets. Despite an estimated ratio of 100 lurkers for every one posting member, Fools are emerging from behind their pseudonyms to meet in public.

'We have get-togethers every month,' says Bruce. 'We invite everyone down the pub to meet the staff. It's a good laugh – and everyone gets horribly drunk.'

MOTLEY FOOL *Fool's gold*



Their philosophy: to 'educate, amuse, enrich'

WHAT IS IT? British spin-off of a US financial site, pitched at amateur investors.
LAUNCHED 1996.
TRAFFIC 225,000 visitors a month, 150,000 registered users, 2,000 posts a day, 13m page impressions a month.
BASE London W1.
KEY FEATURES Share prices and sound investment advice, backed up by a knowledgeable and largely self-regulating community of 'Fools'.

WORDS: MATTHEW BINGHAM; PICTURES: GUY JORDAN

WALK THE WALK

Follow the online ramblings of a 64-year-old accountant

WALKLINK

www.walklink.com

By the time most people get to 64, they're either well prepared for retirement or well into it. Not so Pat Raftery; still an active accountant, the energetic Midlander has recently branched out into running a Web site on top of it all.

'Yeah, I know I'm mad,' he admits. 'I'm far too old to be doing this.' But like a lot of Bright Sparks, the idea came to Pat when he was dissatisfied with the Web coverage of something close to his heart. For, unlike Paul McCartney's similarly venerable hero in *When I'm 64* who likes to 'go for a ride' on Sunday morning, Pat goes walking.

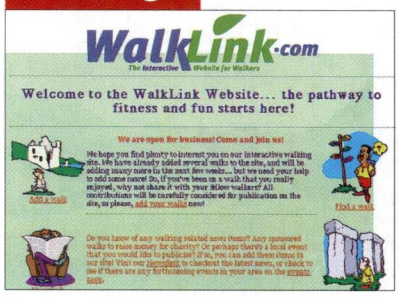
'My family all walk,' reveals Pat. 'We've got six kids – well I say kids, they're aged 30 to 40 – and most of them go walking.' But when the rambling Rafterys logged on to the Net to plan their weekend walks, they found the sites too bland. What I like about the Net is that you can say what you think about things and get them published.' And so was born the idea for an interactive walkers' Web site.

Luckily, help was at hand. 'One of my clients, Keith Jones, had changed direction to become a Web designer,' explains Pat, 'so we put our heads together. Quite a lot of stuff on the site has been his idea.'

It's all very well having warm words, but the visuals have to back it up. No problem for chatty Pat. 'My wife bought me a book of cartoons by Jim Watson,' he smiles. 'I phoned him and said "I love your cartoons, I want to put some of them on the site," and he said "that's fine, go ahead"'.

'Yeah, I know I'm mad; I'm far too old to be doing this sort of thing'

Any accountant would be aware of the financial implications of setting up a Web site, but Pat didn't have to dip into his pension fund. 'The Coventry & Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce kindly suggested that there might be a subsidy there, which was useful.'



The drawback for Pat is that he's in danger of not having enough time for his first love: traversing the hills. 'I'm putting in 30 hours a week on the site,' he sighs. "It's don't give up the day job", but the day job is taking a bit of a pounding. And when you get to my age you tend to get tired.'

Somehow, it's hard to see Pat hanging up his boots just yet.

SERIOUSLY FOLKS

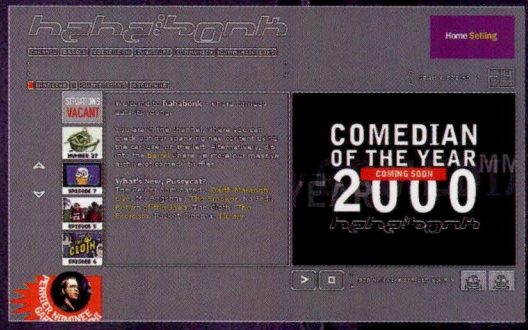
The comedy duo who owe it all to a hyena

HAHABONK

www.hahabonk.com

Given the nature of Hahabonk, comedy Web site and purveyor of live and interactive humour, it's not surprising that it's headed by a double act. In the Morecambe corner there's Mike Bennett, head of development, and in the Wise corner there's Arvind Ethan David, managing director.

From their comedy nerve centre in the London district of Hoxton, Arvind, Mike and their team are on a mission to spread mirth through the Net. Hahabonk is one part of their business, Empty Space, and it came about almost by accident while developing a Web site for the theatre community.



'Hahabonk was just one line in a much longer business plan. It was meant to be 'Hahabonk – joke of the day',' explains Arvind, 'and that was the strongest idea and we liked the name. After porn and finance, the two success stories in online content, comedy follows. It's short, it's addictive – obviously not as compelling as porn – but it's a need.'

Will humour travel globally? Arvind thinks so, but recognises they might have to tread carefully: 'After I returned from a trip to Asia, there was some concern about the name being risqué because of the 'bonk' bit.' 'Perhaps we'll call it Hahabunk over there,' jokes Mike.

The site launched on 1 April this year (when else?) and has since built up a large collection of live comedy (much of it recorded at Hahabonk-sponsored events at this year's Edinburgh Fringe), interactive comedy games and humorous animations.

Unlike many dotcom start-ups, Hahabonk didn't go cap-in-hand to venture capitalists, but raised money from friends in the digital media world. So you haven't seen a high-profile advertising campaign for Hahabonk. 'Nor will you,' insists Mike, 'our business is not a destination site, it's a hub for the comedy world.' Their goal is to sell their content to other portals. You can find Hahabonk material on 10 of the top 25 UK websites including BBC Online, Freeserve and MSN.

A veritable bonkbuster, it would seem, but can the joshing duo remember the original 'hahabonk' joke?

'The first time I heard it,' says Mike, 'it was "What goes ha-ha-bonk?" and the answer was "A hyena laughing his head off".'

'No,' says Arvind, "it's a man laughing his head off."

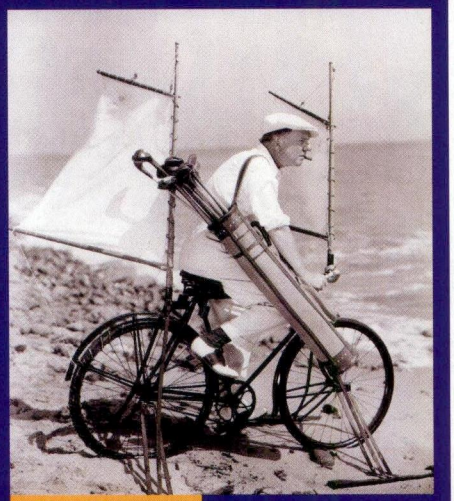
'It makes sense; it's funny because hyenas laugh constantly until they laugh their heads off... but everyone else thinks it's a man,' admits Mike.

'After the two online success stories of porn and finance, comedy follows'

WORDS: GARY PARKINSON (WALKLINK), JAMES SNODGRASS (HAHABONK); PICTURES: STEVE ORINO

ON YER BIKE!

From a hat just like Chris Boardman's to those slinky shorts, it's all available online



While the nation was grinding to a halt during the fuel crisis, there was one group of people who stayed silently smug throughout. They arrived at work at the usual time and revelled in the fact that the rest of the population had to forsake their cars for public transport; it is, of course, the cycling fraternity.

As the editorial on the excellent Cycleweb (*www.cycleweb.co.uk*) said at the time, why not cycle to work? 'Do it, and you might find it curiously addictive,' it remarked.

If the fuel crisis has introduced the joys of pedal power to you, you'll need to know where to go to get kitted out. The good news is, there's no shortage of excellent online stores around and the aforementioned Cycleweb has a good range of links to many of them.

If you believe the image depicted on many home pages, cycle shop people are awfully friendly bods, and many are keen to push their pre-sales service on the Internet – so feel free to test it out via email if you're a novice. Bikepark (*www.bikepark co.uk*) even offer a bike parking service at its Covent Garden office for those who've cycled to work, and you can have your bike repaired while you are there or even hire a different one for the weekend.

Try it and you might just find cycling to work curiously addictive

So you've got your wheels (or tandem from *www.sjscyles*) and it's time to hit the road, the Net will even help you find safe cycle routes at *www.sustrans.co.uk*.

HOW THE SITES COMPARE

BIKEPARK *www.bikepark.co.uk*
Well-known in the Covent Garden area as the place where cyclists can park while they're at work – also has an excellent online shop. ★★★★★

ST JOHN'S CYCLES *www.sjscycles.com*
They'll build you a bike, sell you a tandem and have accessories which they claim are unavailable elsewhere. ★★★★

SQUARE DEALS ON WHEELS *www.sdeals.com*
Prides itself on its pre-sales service and makes a point of not letting fancy graphics get in the way of all of its lovely stock. ★★★★

FREEWHEEL *www.freewheel.co.uk*
Good bargains greet you on the home page and there's a mailing list to sign up to for special offers as soon as they appear. ★★★★

CYCLE WORLD *www.cycleworld.co.uk*
The Chris Boardman of cycle shops when it comes to speed at finding you a product. You can also download a jolly screensaver. ★★★★★

RETRO CYCLE SHOP *www.retrobicycles.co.uk*
Cycling brooches, cufflinks or plaques? Maybe not then. But if you're looking for a present for a bike enthusiast, don't dismiss it. ★★★

SUSTRANS *www.sustrans.co.uk*
The National Cycle Network's site aims to get us all on our bikes. The shop isn't huge, but has the usual accessories and good maps. ★★★★

WIGGLE *www.wiggle.co.uk*
Easy to navigate site, which is just as well since there are some 2,000 products on it. ★★★★

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www.freewheel.co.uk

CYCLING MAPS
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SPRING GLOVES £11.95
www.sdeals.com

CANNONDALE
R400 £725
www.bikepark.co.uk

WORDS: SUE WEEKES; PICTURES: NICK WRIGHT, KOBAL COLLECTION

BRAKE LEVERS £34.04
www.sjscyles.com

KEVLAR SADDLE £22.95 *www.sdeals.com*

SHIMANO CASSETTE £42.55
www.sjscycles.com

SHIMANO SHOES £69 *www.freewheel.co.uk*

MISTRAL GLASSES £24.95 *www.sdeals.com*

TIMBUKTU 2 DEEDOG £59.99
www.bikepark.co.uk

NALINI SHORTS £9.95
www.sdeals.com

AVACS PUMP £22 *www.freewheel.co.uk*

OZZO TOP £20.95 *www.sdeals.com*

BRIKO HELMET £45
www.sdeals.com

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NET NEWS, FUN STUFF AND OPINION

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www.thenetnow.co.uk

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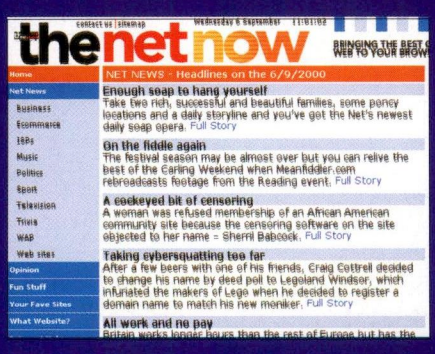
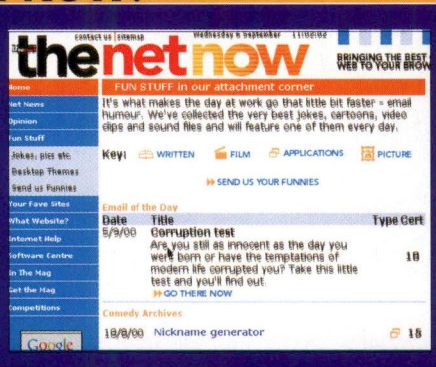


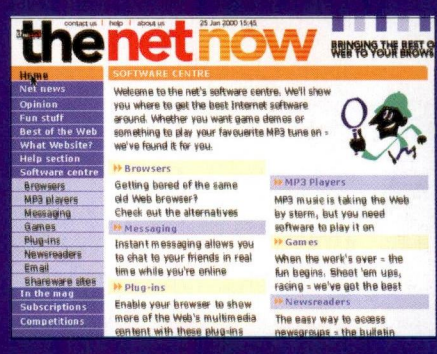
NET NEWS

All the latest Internet news updated every day: we'll bring you the latest sites, news of who's Webcasting and Webchatting where and when – plus all that's happening in the world of the Net.



FUN STUFF

Need something to pass the time? Bored at work and looking for some light relief? Check out our email attachment of the day, offering you the loudest laugh in cyberspace.



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Wednesday 6 September 11:01:34

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On the Internet today...

Taking cybersquatting too far

After a few beers with one of his friends, Craig Cottrell decided to change his name by deed poll to Legoland Windsor, which infuriated the makers of Lego when he decided to register a domain name to match his new moniker. Full Story

Enough soap to hang yourself

Take two rich, successful and beautiful families, some poncy locations and a daily storyline and you've got the Net's newest daily soap opera. Full Story

On the fiddle again

The festival season may be almost over but you can relive the best of the Carling Weekend when Meanfiddler.com rebroadcasts footage from the Reading event. Full Story

A cockeyed bit of censoring

A woman was refused membership of an African American community site because the censoring software on the site objected to her name – Sherril Babcock. Full Story

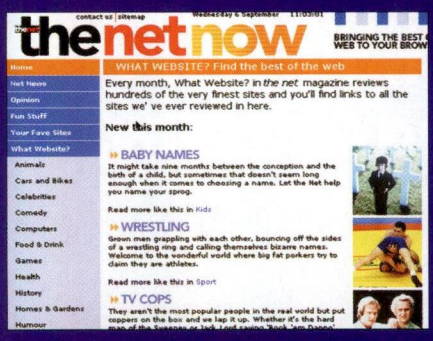
LATEST NEWS Business

Go to the world's best online jokeshop

Soil your pantaloons at the sharpest quips on the Internet. We've collected the best email attachments - and there's a new offering every day.

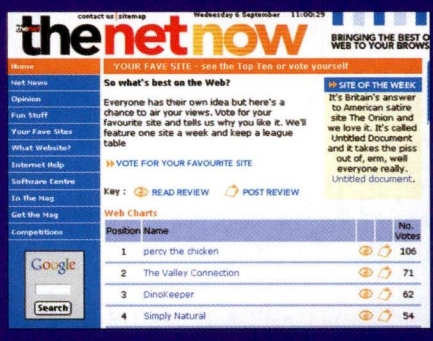
GO TO FUN STUFF

And you thought it couldn't get any better



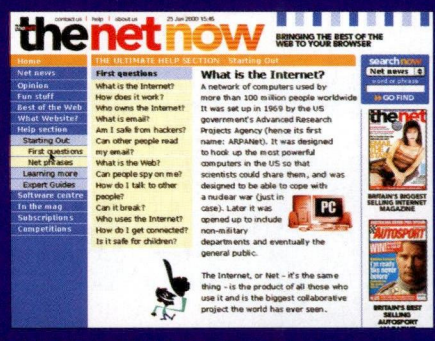
WHAT WEBSITE?

With the huge number of Web addresses in *the net* each month, you could be excused from not wanting to type them all in. No worries: we've archived every site we've ever featured!



BEST OF THE WEB

What's your favourite Web site? We'll feature one Web site every week from your recommendations. Plus, we'll keep a live league table of the sites that receive the most votes from readers.



HELP SECTION

Need some help finding your way around the Internet? Don't know your FTP from your HTML? We've got loads of Net advice written in plain English to help you out.

PRIVACY SPECIAL

We know what you did last session

You're being watched every time you use the Internet. We reveal who and why, and tell you how to fight back

nload
cloaking device

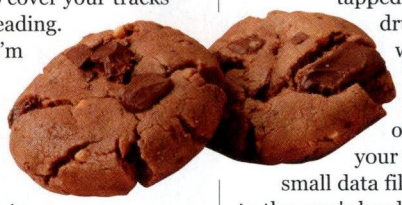
David went to St. Mary's Primary School.
So did Peter.

David played up front for Clifford Rovers.
So did Peter.
David lost his virginity to Julie Gordon.
So did Peter.
David left school and moved to London.
So did Peter.
David found a 1965 Lambretta on QXL.com
and placed a bid for it.
So did Peter.

Some things are best kept to yourself.
QXL.com
online auctions

Imagine walking into your local baker's to price up the pies. Would you expect the baker to be able to find out where you'd been on the High Street, and how often, over the last year? Or to know your address and bombard you with mail? Or to sell your details to the butcher, the candlestick maker and anyone who's willing to pay for them to send you unsolicited mail?

It sounds far-fetched, but that's what can happen when you switch the High Street for the information superhighway. The technology exists to follow your tracks and use the information to target you – in the name of consumerism, of course. But the technology also exists to cover your tracks – wherever they've been leading.



Don't get me wrong, I'm not making any presumptions about what you do online; I'm not suggesting you'd ever visit sites you wouldn't want your boss to know about or look at things that would make a *Eurotrash* producer blush, let alone download pirated software or music. Nor would I, for a minute, suggest that you've ever denied receiving an email reminder when you had in fact ignored it.

But let's say you had done something you probably wouldn't have in front of your beloved, boss or rabbi – perhaps while enjoying the supposed anonymity of the Web you had satisfied your curiosity, or learnt a little about drugs, or gone to a recruitment site. Let's imagine that you'd written or read an email and prefer it not to be known.

Now try to envisage learning that companies are collecting information about what you have downloaded from the Web; that some sites know which site you visited previously; that government agencies were tracking people who showed an interest in particular subjects; that, merely by using the Web, you may be giving away your private email; that others can tell that you have received and opened their email. How about the idea that, while you're surfing, there are programs online that access your computer and check it out? Or that these programs are aided and abetted by things already lurking on your hard drive, which periodically try to go online without your permission?

Paranoid? No, not at all, but only because they really are out to get you.

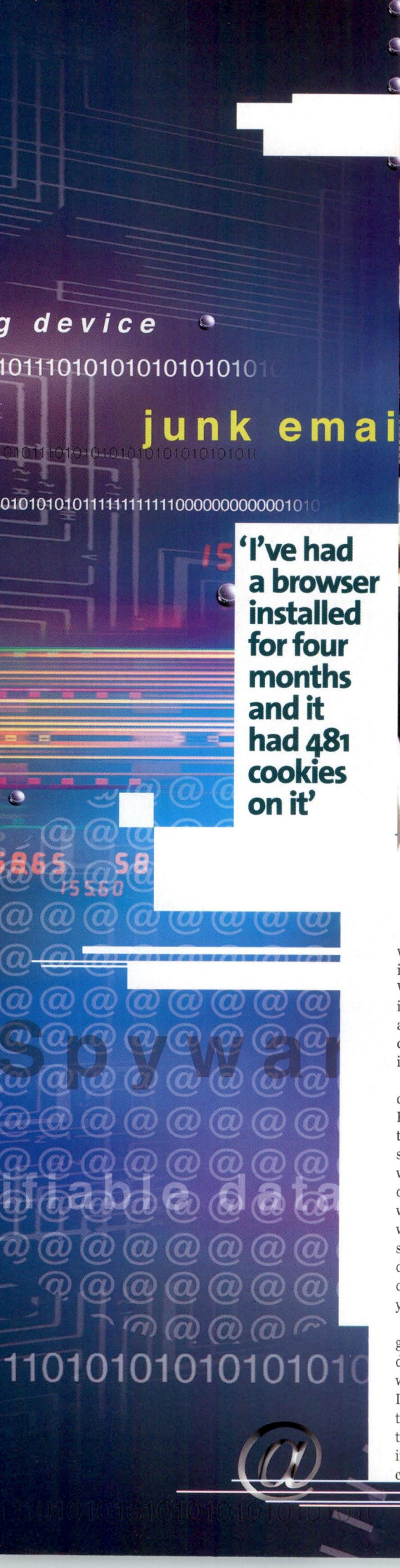
This summer has seen some remarkable revelations for defenders of online privacy – the sort of things Tom Clancy toys with for his novels before rejecting them as too far-fetched: like the Clinton administration owning up to setting cookies to identify people searching for drugs information online; or the acknowledgement that RealNetworks' software (amongst others) calls home, telling the company whenever you download something – whatever it may be and wherever it came from. The scary thing is that, while they may be the most recent and the most eye-popping, these are by no means isolated examples. The first of these cases is an example of the use of cookies, the second an example of the growing phenomenon of spyware. The only truly unusual thing about this summer is that it is the US government caught with its hands in your hard disk – generally it's the marketeers of big business that are to blame.

COOKIEGATE

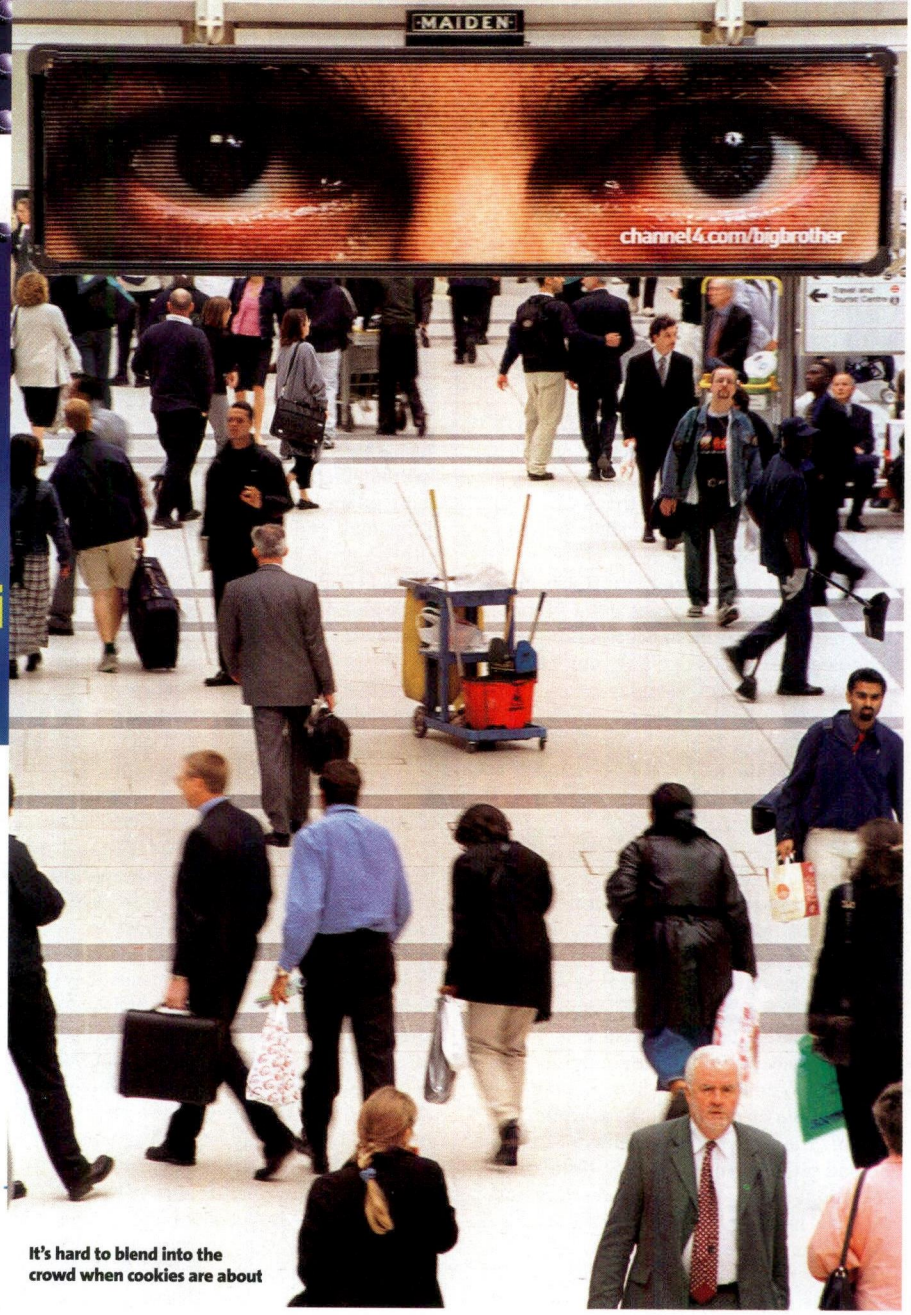
In June, the White House conceded that there might have been a breach of privacy guidelines, and told the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) to stop setting a cookie that tracks computer users who make enquiries about drugs. Prior to that, if you went into a major search engine and tapped in any one of a number of drugs-related keywords, you would be shown an ONDCP 'say no to drugs' message and a cookie would be set on your hard drive without your permission. Cookies are small data files that a Web site writes to the user's hard drive. The information cookies collect, which can then be read back by the sites you visit, means that site operators can track passwords and lists of visited pages. That, in turn, means they can build up a pretty good idea of what you like and where you go. The company that set up the cookies for the ONDCP, DoubleClick, denies that any 'personally identifiable data about visitors were given to the government'. Instead, the company explained, it was simply monitoring which adverts were most effective in sending surfers to the drug office's own Web site for anti-drug information. Privacy campaigners, however, remain unhappy – not least since DoubleClick has bought a company called Abacus Direct, which has assembled five-year buying profiles on 88 million American households. Meaning that, if you put the two together, you have some decidedly 'personally identifiable data' tying up Web habits with individual names and home addresses. DoubleClick acknowledges this, but stresses that: 'Non-personally identifiable information collected by DoubleClick in the course of ad delivery can be associated with a user's personally identifiable information if that user has agreed to receive personally tailored ads.' Meaning that, while they can add the info up to equal you and your habits, they don't unless you ask them to. To be fair, there are aspects of ad monitoring that all of us benefit from: aside from the fact that ads pay for many of our favourite sites, there is the fact that a 30-year-old male surfer would prefer to be targeted with ads aimed at him,

Info collected by cookies helps site operators build up a good idea of where you go

WORDS: STEVE SHIPSIDE; ILLUSTRATION: GARY LOCO; PICTURES: CORBIS, LIAISON, KOBAL



'I've had a browser installed for four months and it had 481 cookies on it'



It's hard to blend into the crowd when cookies are about

while those same ads could be singularly inappropriate if sent to a female teenager. What privacy protesters don't like is that, in many cases, we are not told when cookies are set and information gleaned. Indeed, we commonly act as if we were somehow invisible, anonymous, beyond reach.

'You're not anonymous on the Net at all,' confirms computer security consultant Robert Schifreen. 'If someone has set up their server properly, then they'll know what site you've come from; ad links, in particular, will certainly know what ad link you clicked on so they can know which ads work and which ones don't. Advertisers will obviously want to know how their money is being spent and, in that respect, it's not much different from calling up a telephone sales company which will promptly ask you where you saw their ad.'

Understandable, perhaps, but Schifreen goes on to point out how much is being done behind the scenes: 'to see the extent of what goes on, get hold of a tool like Ontrack Internet Clean-Up, which will show you all the cookies on your computer and tell you the contents. In my case, I've had a browser installed for four months and it had 481 cookies on it.'

The question of whether cookies can, in themselves, identify a person rather than a machine is a little more complex. In some cases, it's possible for you to access a site and for that site to work out your personal email based on nothing more than your visit. It all becomes a question of IP address: some ISPs and email systems (particularly those that don't offer you multiple aliases) work on what's known as a fixed IP address. With such addresses, a site that captures your IP address as you visit will then find that it always resolves to the same email identity. From then on, the cookies give information about your browsing tastes and, at any time, one of the sites you have visited may choose to email you. Very disconcerting!

And cookies aren't the only fixed identifiers out there: the documents you create can also carry snippets of information that include the serial number of the software that made them. This means that a client company wise to that fact can always work out who the real author of a document is. 'Which,' notes Robert Schifreen, 'is why some companies buy 200 copies of a piece of software, install one on 200 machines, and keep the rest in a storeroom [so as to comply with license requirements].'

web sight

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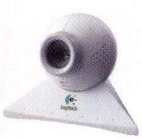

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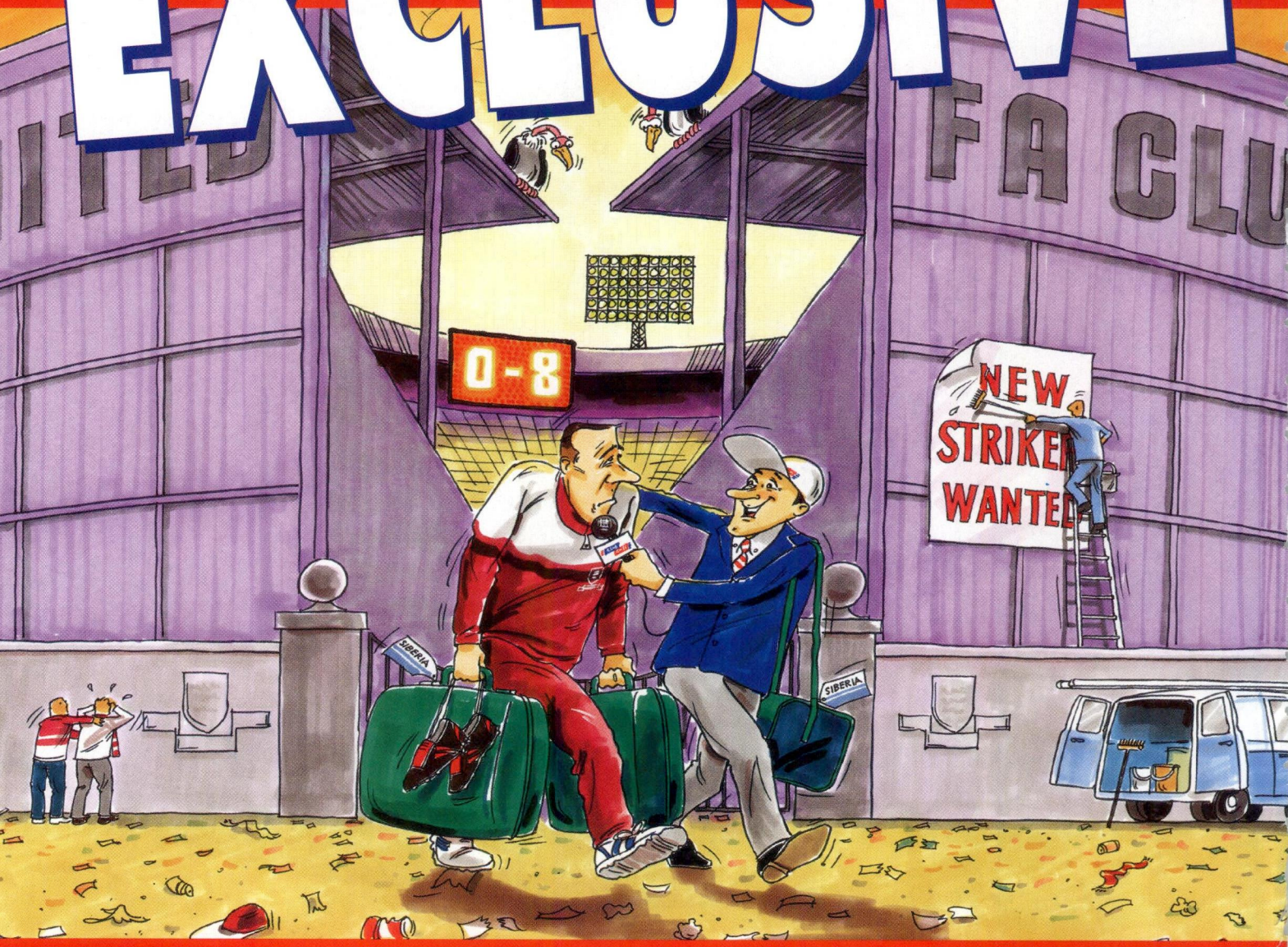

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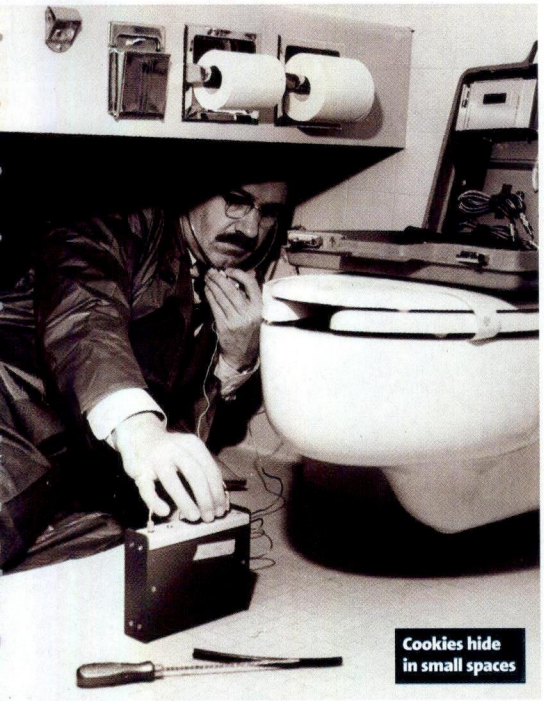


Cookies hide in small spaces

Again, this summer a number of sources complained about so-called 'Web bugs'. Web bugs are invisible markers found in files, notably in such popular staples as Word, Excel and PowerPoint. When the file is sent as an attachment, it contains an image file located on a remote server; opening the document and requesting the image triggers a signal to be sent back to the document author. The signal incorporates that dreaded IP address and thereby can allow the new reader of the document to be identified, which is potentially awkward for those who prefer to swear they never received the mail in the first place.

SPYWARE

Cookies on your hard drive are one thing – they are simple ID tags that can, with a little care, be managed (see 'How to Beat the Spies'). Software that actively calls back home or tries to break into your machine as you surf is another thing altogether, though no less common. The RealNetworks example is a case in point: last July, RealNetworks was accused of having a built-in feature in its RealDownload software which transmitted specific users' exact download habits back to the parent company. Privacy researcher Steve Gibson proclaimed that the software was phoning home, an accusation promptly denied by the company, which had been similarly embarrassed last year by a similar 'phone home' feature being found in its RealJukeBox software. The argument raged over the fact that, whenever the software was used to download from the Net, it sent a string of numbers back to RealNetworks. RealNetworks said the number was random, and in no way identified a person or file; Gibson said that it included the URL of the file, and an ID code for the user. When Gibson eventually found the words 'Steve' and 'Gibson' being sent back by the software, the case appeared closed and RealNetworks agreed to remove the feature. 'We weren't even aware it was there,' comments David Brotherton, a spokesperson for the company. 'We were not using it to log users' behaviour in any way. The 32-character string served no function, and it has been eliminated.' So we are left to accept that, while there is a piece of recording apparatus built into the software, its creators were unaware of its existence, and certainly weren't collecting the information being sent back to them.

Don't think this is just about RealNetworks, either: the case remains to be resolved, but this Summer also saw AOL/Netscape being slapped with a lawsuit regarding the 'SmartDownload' feature in the Netscape Communicator Web browser, which may secretly transmit file information to Netscape and America Online. The case contends that Netscape identifies the name, type, and source of executable files downloaded by a user which, along with cookie information (see above), enables the company to identify the individual user. No one is saying that they are using that information, you understand, and, if RealNetworks is anything to go by, all concerned can be expected to inhale sharply and say they wouldn't dream of it.

Personal experience using monitoring software shows that, on average, four or five programs try to gain access to my own computer every day. Sometimes the IP address of the sniffing machine can itself be intercepted, and has, to date, usually turned out to belong to ISPs or marketing organisations which would have a vested interest in totting up Web use (all concerned have denied any deliberate snooping). Similarly, it is interesting to note how often programs that are supposedly not active will make a break for the Web when you're online. Monitoring shows me that RealPlayer will try to access the Web on every surfing session, an access that you would normally not be aware of. The exact reasons why remain unexplained by the company, but the above may provide the odd clue to any worried parties.

Spyware actively tries to call back home or break into your machine as you surf

JUNK EMAIL

Finally there's the dreaded junk emails, less sinister than spyware and cookies, but still annoying nonetheless and the bane of browsing. You know the story: you open your email after a gap of two days to find upward of 50 spam messages in your inbox.

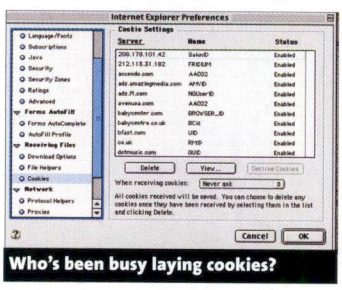
One of the most common ways in which spammers access your details is by using software known as 'header scanners' that sift through newsgroup postings. Even though they have your address, however, you might not have theirs for long, as spammers tend to frequently change their address, and often use free accounts.

HOW TO BEAT THE SPIES

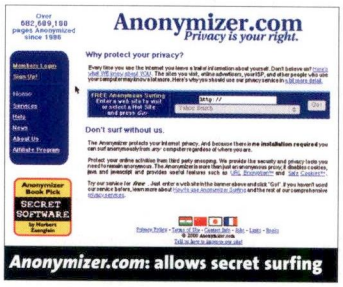
Stop cookies being set in your browser without permission, hide your identity when surfing and set a trap to catch out spyware

COOKIES

Take a good look at the contents of the folder called 'Cookies' in your Windows directory and you'll get an idea of some (but not all) of the identifiers that have been placed on your machine. As you can see, not all cookies are unwanted, as you'll realise if you've ever opted to go for one-click shopping on a site that recognises you as you return for another go. Many of the cookies, however, are simply placed without your knowledge and so, aside from the privacy implications, some people bridle at the sheer ill manners of the thing. Such people have created a variety of cookie-busting shareware and freeware for pretty much all operating systems known to man. Some such packages simply clean up those on your hard drive, others, such as Cookie Crusher, don't allow them to be set in the first place without your explicit approval. There's a pick and mix assortment at ***www.epic.org/ privacy/tools.html***.



Who's been busy laying cookies?



***Anonymizer.com*: allows secret surfing**

CLOAKING DEVICE

If you're in any doubt about what another party can discover from only a cursory glance at your browser, go to the I Can See You program at ***www.anonymizer.com***. There you'll find how transparent you can be to the system, as well as how easy it is to place cookies on your machine.

Anonymizer is a useful little tool that allows you to either use a freeware, site-at-a-time approach to surfing or pay a little extra (up to $20 per month) for permanent protection. Basically, it cloaks off ID data, making it hard – if not impossible – for sites to collect your IP address or previous surfing history. Just type in the URL you want to go to from the Anonymizer and you're off, albeit at a noticeably slower pace. Similar offerings include the Cloak (***www.the cloak.com/homepa ge/index.php3***) and Aixs (***aixs.net***). Bear in mind that, while the sites you then visit don't know who you are, the cloaking sites you started from still do.

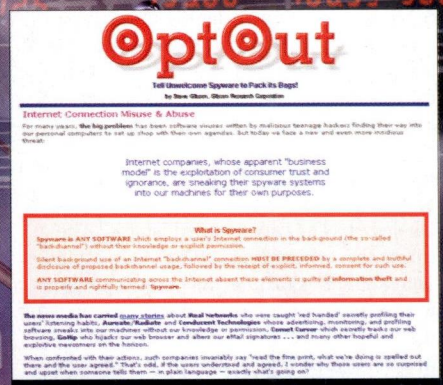
They can reply and you can receive it, but there is no way that they are able to trace you

EMAIL PRIVACY

There are many things you can do to ensure greater privacy. For a start, you've probably heard of anonymous remailers, where you send your mail to them and it is sent on to your intended correspondent, but without your name or email details. They can reply and you can receive it, but there's no way of tracing you short of storming the remailer and seizing their equipment (which has happened on occasion). If it sounds like the refuge for sleazeballs, bear in mind that the system's exponents include Amnesty International and The Samaritans. A variety of emailers can be found at ***www.cs.berkeley.edu/~raph/remailer-list.html***.

Sometimes, however, you don't want to be anonymous – you just don't want to be overheard. Plain text email is vulnerable, not least since it is usually stored on an email host that waits for your correspondent to log on before forwarding. It is possible to spoof your machine into sending those emails to an imitation host, where they can be read at leisure by someone so-minded.

Secure services like E-Courier from Prodamus (***www.prodamus.co.uk***) make emails illegible in transit, and store them on secure servers, 'you get a notification from the server first,' explains Trevor Masters, Prodamus' Technical Director. 'That, then, takes you back to the server to pick up the message, which can have an expiry date after which it self-destructs – a bit like *Mission Impossible*.' E-Courier also has a recorded



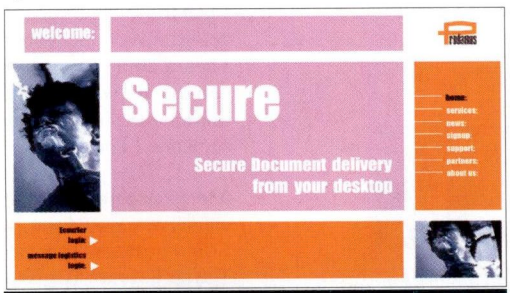
Gibson special: tracks down unwelcome spyware

delivery function to ensure you know that your target has received the mail, but beware, again this means you can't get away with claiming no knowledge of that invoice or reminder. Pretty Good Privacy (***www.ifi.uio.no/pgp/***), that well-known email encryption system, has recently had a slight setback as the result of the discovery of a pretty good bug in it, but still remains the choice of millions. Other examples include HushMail (***www.hushmail.com/***) and SafeMessage (***www.safemessage.com/***).

But that still doesn't stop unwanted spam finding its way into your inbox. The first, civilised, reasonable step is simply to send a return email to the mass sender asking politely to be removed from the mailing list. You never know, it might work. Unfortunately the worst junk mail is often from people who won't take no for an answer, not even a polite one. The next option is to set up filters: most email programmes have built-in filters that will direct mail to different inboxes for your later perusal. Most can also be set to block mail from a specified address although, as mentioned earlier, with spammers frequently changing their address this option is of limited use. You could also change *your* address by using a remailer service to automatically forward mail to your new inbox, which works best when combined with having several user names. Use one for your family and friends, one for work, and one for newsgroups, mail from which can be sent straight to the bin if desired.

SPYWARE – SPY VS SPY

Spyware is out there, and it is collecting your details for marketeers. One protection you can take is to download Opt Out from the grandly named Gibson Research Corporation (it's a bloke called Steve Gibson) at ***grc.com/optout.htm***. Opt Out scans your registry for evidence of any of the major snooping packages that are out there.



Get your email documents delivered with peace of mind

If you are truly worried about surfing snoop software, however, then it's time to think 'firewall'. Chances are you think firewalls are for vast corporations with teams of network engineers devouring pizza and performing syncopated shrugging whenever anything goes wrong. Well, you're right, of course, but firewalls also have their uses for the small office, home office, or plain hobbyist. A firewall is two-way, so not only does it stop unauthorised attempts to sneak in to your machine, but also raps the knuckles of any application which tries to phone home without permission. There are relatively sophisticated products such as NetworkICE's BlackICE Defender (***www.networkice.com/***) and BackOfficer Friendly (BOF) from NFR (***www.nfr.net/***), which detects BackOffice even from the notorious BackOrifice. BackOfficer also acts as a honeypot – a pretend system that leads hackers to believe they've got in when actually you are tracking them. Both of these are for the more adventurous small office, but even the home user can benefit from relatively easy-to-set-up products such as Norton Personal Firewall 2000 V2.0 (***www.symantec.com/***). Total newcomers, however, may well want to go for Zone Alarm (***www.zonelabs.com***), not least since (unlike the above) it has a demo version, and it's free.

With Zone Alarm or its kin installed, any software attempting to reach the Net has to ask your permission, while attempts to probe your system are blocked and signalled. Again, you would be surprised how often remote systems attempt to probe. The thing is, this may be just marketeers checking for cookies (though that alone may upset you) or it could be a truly hostile attempt to damage your system. Bear in mind that hackers also have a nasty habit of launching their attacks from proxy servers so as to avoid being tracked. That, in turn, means taking over and using another machine. Don't let it be yours and, in particular, be aware that if the wonders of ADSL have come to your neighbourhood, it also means that your machine is open to the Net 24 hours a day. Other sources of information include JunkBusters at ***www.junkbusters.com*** and the Electronic Privacy Information Centre (***www.epic.org***), as well as the Privacy page at ***www.privacy.org***.

So, if the events of last summer show that they just might know what you did, that's no reason to treat the computer as a spy in your home. Of course, you may be untroubled by any inspection, but forewarned is forearmed – and with the above tools and tips it is possible to turn the tables on the e-telltales.

KELLY BROOK

She's written much of her new site herself and is practically a Net nerd. She tells *the net* why

IT'S OVER A YEAR SINCE KELLY BROOK departed the cottages of *Big Breakfast*. Since then, she's been acting, modelling and developing a love of the Internet. She's also been hard at work creating her own official site, and spoke excitedly to *the net* about her new passion.

Do you think it's important for celebrities to have their own sites?
Oh yes; it's the way forward isn't it? The Internet is where everything's going to go. That show *Big Brother* has done wonders for the Internet because people are realising that you can watch 24-hour television on it; so everyone could have their own little station – if they wanted to.

If I want to do a television show and no-one wants to commission it – and if I publicise it in the right way – I can just do it on my Web site. It's like a window just for me to do exactly what I want. I'm really getting into it.

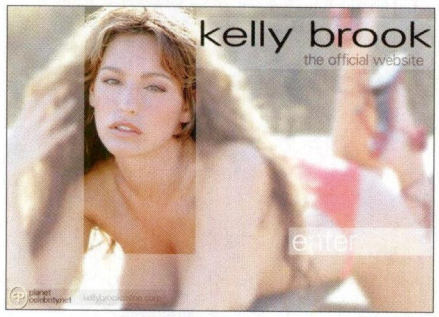
I know a lot of celebrities probably don't have time to do that kind of thing as they're too busy being celebrities, but you have to be a little bit business-minded about it. I've got a lot of fans out there and I've been asked so many times if I have a fan club – which I haven't – so setting up this site is a chance to let people get hold of official merchandise and keep them up-to-date with what I'm doing.

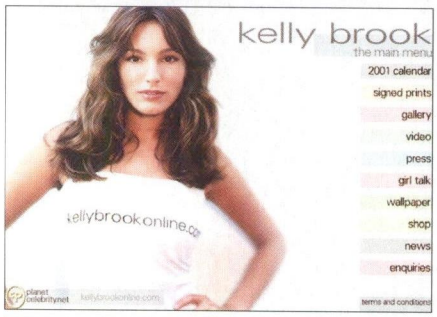
What's going to be on the site?
We'll probably set up particular days when I will chat live to the fans. There will be loads of exclusive pictures and, as I'm doing shoots every month, there will be regular updates.

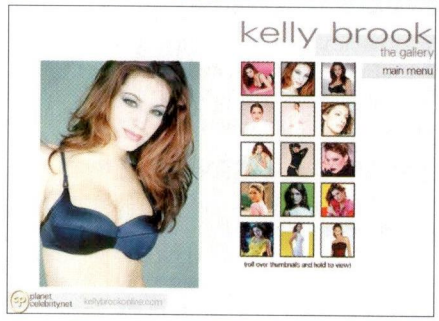
There will also be an exclusive interview about my up-and-coming film *Sorted*, my dress at the *Snatch* premiere, the time I spent on *Big Breakfast*, MTV and more. I've been really honest and, because it's my own words, I know it's not going to get taken out of context. There will be a monthly update of what I'm up to – I've got a laptop now, which I'll be taking everywhere, and I'll use my video camera to shoot my own footage of things and put that on to the site for people to see as well.

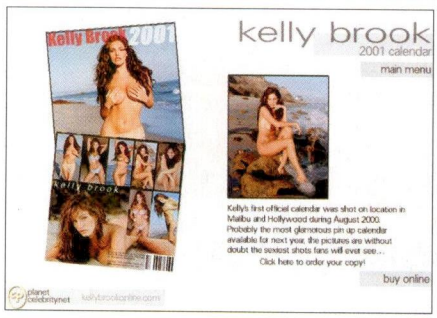
Do you see it as a way in which you can get a lot closer to your fans?
I think if I'm bored, I'll just go on the site and say 'hello' to people and have a chat to see what they think about what I am doing. It's nice to know what the public think because they are the people that make or break you. It would be nice to ask them if they did like my dress at the *Snatch* premiere as there was such a debate about it. I can also get ideas from the fans about what they want me to do.

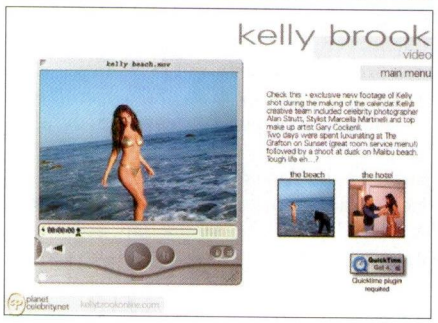
www.kellybrookonline.com











Many fans have already set up Kelly Brook sites. What do you think of them?
I found it quite flattering logging on and seeing all these sites about me. I think it's really sweet and I don't really mind it, as long as they aren't making money out of it. If it's a fan doing it because they enjoy my work and they're just putting pictures up of me, then that's fine. I'm not about to start sending legal letters out to people to stop the sites. It's good for me because it makes me look more popular, so as long as they all have links to the official site, that's fine.

Many of the sites consist mainly of pictures and there are screensavers and wallpapers of you. Isn't it strange to think people see you as soon as they turn their computer on?
It was a big shock to me. I was in a meeting a year ago and met a bloke who said, 'I can't believe I'm finally meeting you; you're my screensaver'. I didn't even know what a screensaver was – I didn't have a clue what he was on about.

We've actually gone one better than that now. On my site you can get Kelly Brook calendar wallpaper, so every month you get a new picture of me and you can do your typing over the picture rather than just have a picture pop up when you turn the computer on. Whenever you're working there'll be a new picture. It's just like a calendar on the wall, really, but just a bit more up-to-date.

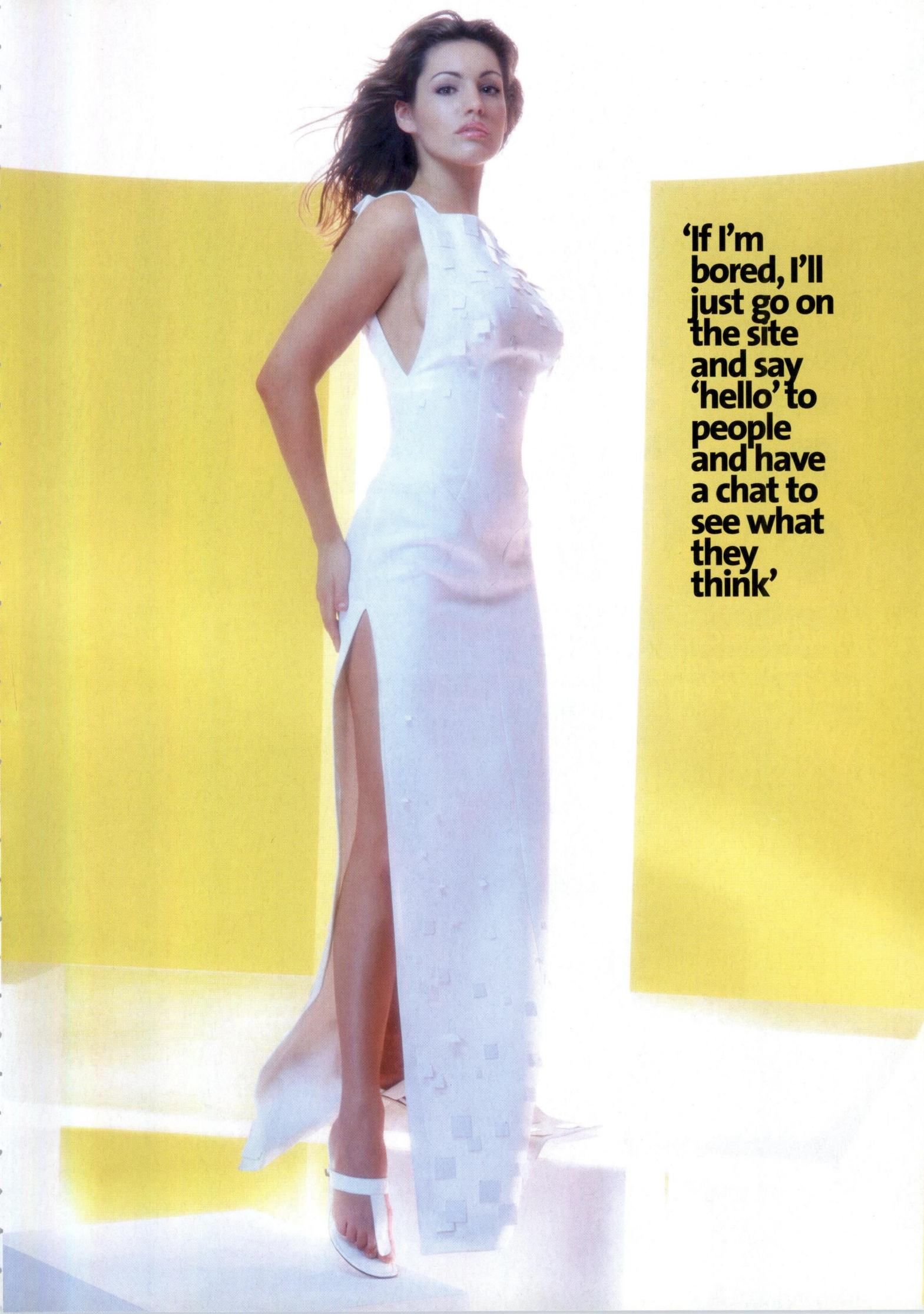
You said you'll be selling merchandise on the site, but what do you like to buy on the Net?
I like those little doggy costumes. You can get little Wonder Woman suits for your dog. I heard about these Pamela Anderson dolls you can get which sound quite funny; I don't think I'd buy one for me, but as a present for someone I know.

And when you aren't chatting to your fans online, who would you like to speak to?
Erm... probably someone from *EastEnders*. Maybe Barbara Windsor or someone, so I can find out what's going on and which episodes to watch. Something silly like that.

So apart from watching *EastEnders*, what are you doing in the near future?
I'm in LA shooting a film called *Ripper*, which is a horror film, and then I come back to London in November to do a play called *Eye Contact*, which is set in a table dancing club. It's a cool little play. And if you want to know what I'm doing in the New Year, you'll have to log on to find out!

See Kelly online at ***www.kellybrookonline.com***
Her year 2001 calendar is available for purchase from the Web site.

WORDS: PAUL WINSLOW; PICTURES: TIM BRET DAY/CELEBRITYPICTURES.CO.UK



'If I'm bored, I'll just go on the site and say 'hello' to people and have a chat to see what they think'

THE GENTLEMEN'S GUIDE TO FASHION ONLINE

If your wardrobe's more kitsch than cool, sad than suave or mingin' than makin', it's definitely time to use the Internet to up your style cred...

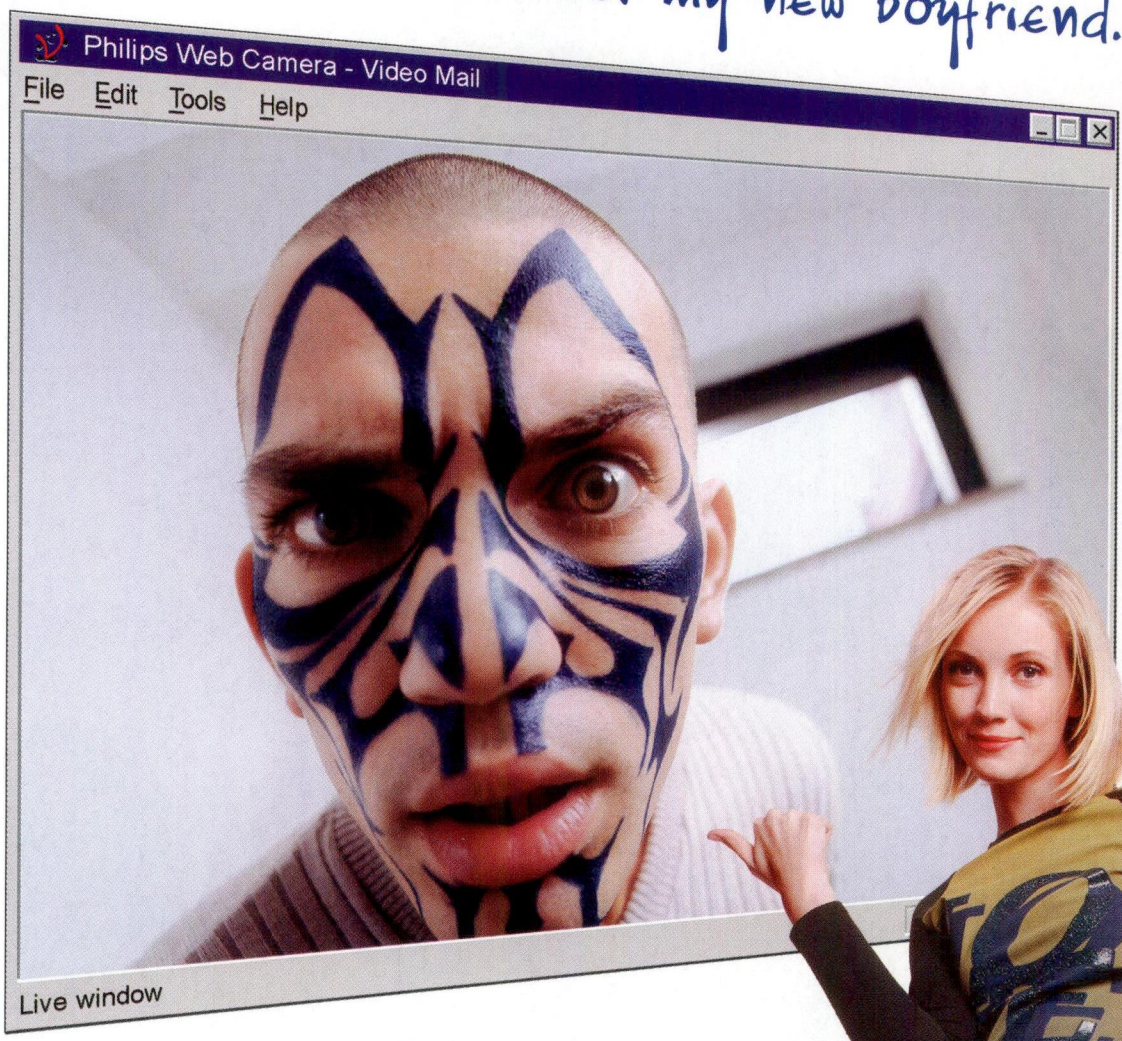
WORDS: CLAIRE MAHATTIE; PICTURES: NICK WRIGHT, REX ONLINE USA; STYLING: PROPPED UP; THANKS TO VIVIENNE WESTWOOD

You're too fat for your jeans, your favourite shirt went out of fashion about the same time as concept albums, and nobody's convinced by that crazily coloured tank top any more (not even your mum – and she knitted it!). A wardrobe makeover is required, urgently, but even the thought of a trip to Top Man brings out your execma. Fear not, sartorial elegance (nothing flash, mind: some socially acceptable shirts, a pair or two of trousers and a few jumpers) is achievable by all, and you don't have to go any further than your grubby old desktop.

With summer officially gone and the cold season just an icy breath away, all that new winter stock is showing itself off in stores the length and breadth of the country, just

elinchrom
SWISS MADE STUDIO FLASH SYSTEM

I figured it was the safest way for my parents to meet my new boyfriend.



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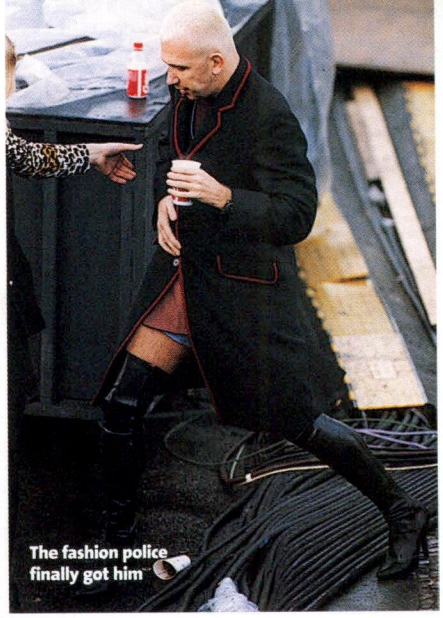
waiting to make its way into *your* wardrobe. We won't pretend that buying clothes online suits everyone – there are men who won't even buy a pair of boxers before they've tried them on – but it's still worth a surf to find out what's in and what's out this season. For more adventurous types, you can indeed buy an entire designer outfit online in the time it takes to say 'Jean-Paul Gaultier'.

The Internet is at your tailored command: the problem is, where to start? Well, thanks to us, you don't have to worry about that. We've found an embarrassing amount of sites and, whether you have the disposable income of a YTS trainee or of Richard Branson, there's a site for you.

WARDROBE STAPLES

If you are new to this buying clothes lark (anywhere – online or otherwise), it may be wise to start with a (High Street) name you've heard of. For your basic apparel, both Next (***www.next.co.uk***) and Marks & Spencer (***www.marksandspencer.com***) have extensive, easy-to-use sites with a great deal of choice – and both have online ordering. Boden (***www.boden.co.uk***) has a wide selection of clothing – and it also offers a discount for online shopping. Trot along to the Gap (***www.gap.com***) to find those essential basics at affordable prices – however, unless you reside in North America, you can't purchase any of the clothes at this site, but you can see



The fashion police finally got him

HAUTE COUTURE

If M&S and Next leave you cold and craving for real fashion, the Internet is just as capable of showing you how to spend your money as those designer palaces on Bond Street.

Start off at Paul Smith (***www.paulsmith.co.uk***); his handsome site contains shots of his latest collections and addresses of the stores where you can actually spend the moolah.

Many top designer names have Web sites coming soon, such as Ralph Lauren (***www.ralphlauren.com***), Prada (***www. prada.com***), and Jil Sander (***www.jilsander.com***). While others, such as Hugo Boss (***www.hugoboss.com***), Versace (***www.versace.com***) and Kenzo (***www.kenzo.com***) have token Web presences. Gucci (***www. gucci.com***) and Byblos (***www. byblos.it***) both have excellent sites with information and pictures for fashion voyeurs to drool over. Sadly you can't buy from them but they'll give you plenty of ideas.

Revive those stylish Mod days at *www.paulsmith.co.uk*

If buying online isn't your style, surf to see what's in fashion

ONLINE PERSONAL GROOMING

Now you've got the clothes, you'll need the face to go with it. Here's where to go

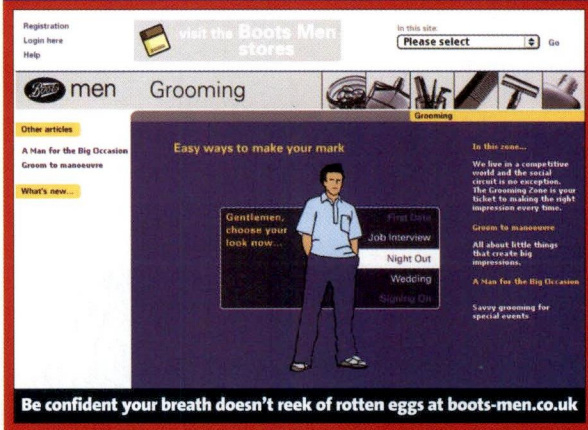
what's going to be available to buy in stores here. Have a look also at River Island's site (***www.riverisland.co.uk***) and Hennes (***www.hennes.com***) to get an idea of what they have in stock. For cheap and cheerful High Street clothes, check out Top Man's slick site at ***www.topman. co.uk***, where you can order online and link up to other sites in the group (including SU214 and Racing Green). Levi's has a funky looking site at ***www.eu.levi.com***, but to purchase anything you'll have to stroll down to the nearest store.

If you find your budget won't stretch to cover a top and trousers from Top Man, the Internet can help. Catalogues such as Freemans always have a wide selection of reasonably priced clothes, and this philosophy has translated to their Web sites. Log on to Freemans at ***www. freemans.com*** to purchase from the range online. Freemans has come a long way since your mum's catalogue days – it even boasts designer labels! Great Universal Stores also has a good selection of bargain items (log on at ***www.gus.co.uk***), while Millets (***www.millets.co.uk***), in keeping with the outdoor nature of their products, lists stores you have to go to in person – no jessie online shopping for them.

YOU, TOO, CAN NOW DRESS DESIGNER

If you have champagne and caviar tastebuds but your income is more lager and pork scratchings, take a look at some of the (mainly American) sites which offer huge discounts on brand name clothing. It may take a few attempts to locate the perfect match, however, as not every size in every style is available – it mainly seems to depend on what items they can get their hands on – but the potential savings can make the search worth it. Check out the Metropolis Clothing Co (***www.metropolis-clothing.com***), which has stock from designers including Armani, DKNY and Dolce & Gabbana, and offers deals such as a pair of Calvin Klein chinos for £39.99. Another US site, Designer Outlet.Com (***wwwz.designeroutlet.com)***, sells Ralph Lauren and Perry Ellis, among others (as of writing, a pair of Dolce & Gabbana jeans were selling for $89, down from the usual retail price of $150). Of course, it's easy to be seduced by the bargains and forget that you have to pay shipping charges and sometimes tax when you buy from an American site.

We thought we netted a bargain with a pair of Nike basketball shoes last month from a US site until we saw the $31 shipping charge, which brought them close to the UK price. So make sure you head for the 'shipping information' section of the site first and this should tell you everything you need



Be confident your breath doesn't reek of rotten eggs at boots-men.co.uk

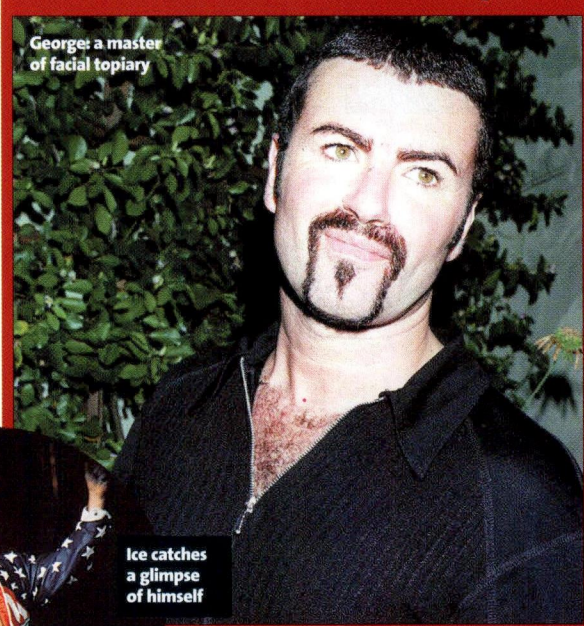
Clothes may maketh the man, but if you have dirty hair, week-old stubble and suspect nasal hair, even the sleekest Armani suit won't save you from slob categorisation. To save you from committing these cardinal sins, the Internet has some handy sites that will explain the essentials, such as how to have a proper shave, and the slightly less common – to exfoliate or not exfoliate?

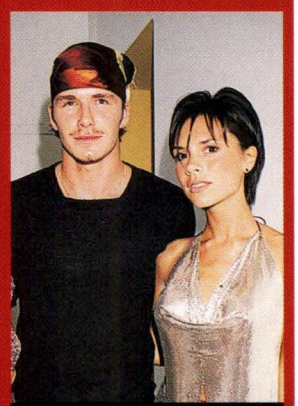
For the basics, log on to Boots at ***www.boots-men.co.uk*** for some handy tips – 'it's all about little things that create big impressions', remember. Also, Vitago (***www.vitago.com***) is excellent for bulk buying requisites. At Grooming 4 Men (***www.grooming4men.com***), you can purchase grooming essentials complete with useful descriptions of all the products; while Manpak (***www.manpak.co.uk***) goes a step further – it offers online ordering of either ready-made or customised sets of essential unguents.

For something more exclusive, check out Molton Brown's site (***www.moltonbrown.com***); in the 'Men's Essentials' section, choose between the ultra-light hydrator or clear skin marine exfoliator, among others. If you're after a bit of history, Taylor of Bond Street (***www.taylorbondst.co.uk***) has been providing gentlemen's hairdressing since 1854. Purchase products online, safe in the knowledge that they 'refuse to compromise quality under any circumstances'.

However, if even basic grooming seems to be a bit too advanced, log on to The Modern Male at ***www.indiatoday.com/iplus/1998_2/male2.html*** to get the whole skin care routine explained in easy language. And if you want advice on how to wear your hair from a woman, go along to Changes Live (***www.changeslive.com***), where Mel Sykes will tell you if you're more suited to a Beckham crop or Grant flop.

Find out if you're suited to a Beckham crop or a Grant flop





It takes money to look like this

3 secrets for smart people

Secret 1.

Team up with online Experts to do your work

Secret 2.

Never reveal everything you know

Secret 3.

....erm....see secret 2

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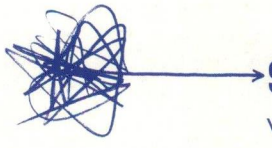

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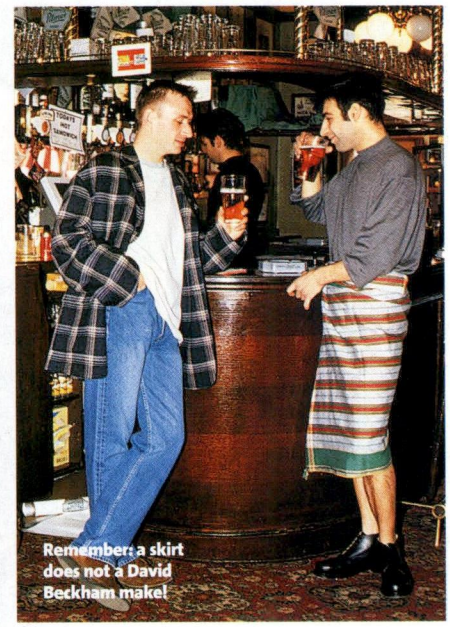
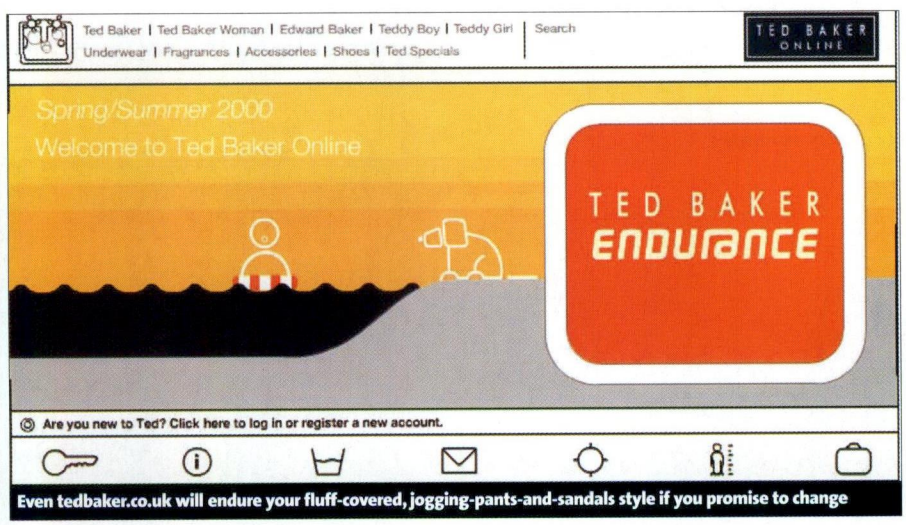

Remember: a skirt does not a David Beckham make!

to know. Good sites will have a clearly laid out chart of the charges for different continents and countries.

If you prefer to play it safe closer to home, sites such as Zercon have tons of designer togs at mucho reduced prices. Zercon, at ***www.zercon.com***, stocks all the usual suspects – a pair of DKNY jeans, for example, was on offer for £30.99 last time we dropped by.

American brands such as Carhartt (genuine rugged workwear, ideal for town), at ***www.carhartt.com***, can be checked online, and log on to street wear specialists Abercrombie & Fitch at ***www.abercrombie.com***

Boy George: strange jeans



Even tedbaker.co.uk will endure your fluff-covered, jogging-pants-and-sandals style if you promise to change

to purchase yet more essential kit. Other good options for hardy, but design-aware gear can be bought at the excellent Fat Face site (***www.fatface. co.uk***) and Joe Brown's (***www.joebrowns.co.uk***).

FOR SOME REALLY FLASH THREADS

For those who want a little bit of label, but nothing too flash (nor extortionate), the Web can still be your friend. You'll find pretty much all the big names online these days. Companies such as Ted Baker (***www.tedbaker.co.uk***), Diesel ***www.diesel.co.uk***) and Firetrap (***www.firetrap. co.uk***) all have fine online presences, while the Ben Sherman site at ***www.bensherman.co.uk/html/home_fla.html*** is a funky, Shockwave-filled fest, previewing the clothes in different sections variously entitled 'Don't Lose Your Shirt' and 'What You Starin' At?'. 'Urbanwear' company Boxfresh (***www.boxfresh.co.uk***) has a comprehensive range of gear which can be bought online, as does the sleek French chain APC; visit at ***www.apc.fr***. Log on to French Connection (***www.frenchconnection.com***), Agnés B (***www. agnesb.fr***) and Sonneti (***www.sonneti.com***) to get a thorough preview of their ranges; and, although you can't buy online at Stüssy (***www.stussy.com***), Dockers (***www.us.dockers. com***) or Tommy Hilfiger ***www.tommy.com***, you can find out where you need to go to buy.

Sites such as Designer Heaven (***www.designerheaven.co.uk***) and the Clothes Store (***www.theclothesstore.com***) have ranges of well-known names such as John Smedley and Nigel Cabourn that can be bought online at good prices; as does French catalogue company La Redoubte at ***www.redoute.co.uk***.

So, get booted and suited without delay. These sites may not turn you into a bona fide style-king like George Michael overnight but you might make it as a fake Jonathan Ross.

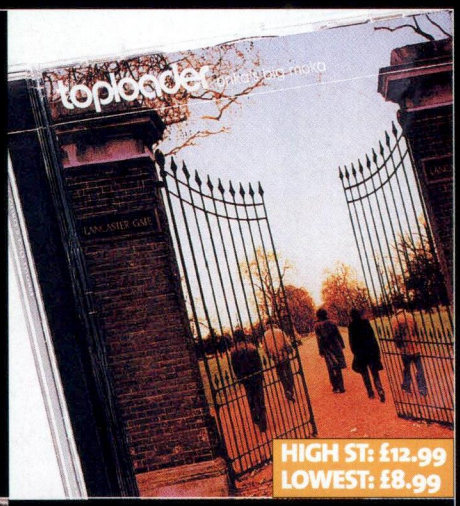
How low can you go?

The new generation of Internet superstores claim to search out unbeatably low prices. But do they deliver? We put five on test

'How much d'ya pay for that then? How much! They saw you coming! You should've gone to Bob's Bargains — I got two for half the price.'

There's at least one 'You've-been-'ad-mate!' in every family. Typically, it's your brother-in-law. He drives thousands of miles every Boxing Day to save five quid on a new three-piece-suite or tumble dryer. 'It's not the money, it's the principle,' he says, shaking his head disapprovingly when you can't be arsed to visit every electrical retailer in continental Europe to ensure you're getting the best price on a pack of 15 Amp fuses. He's annoying, but only because, secretly, it pains us to fork out more for something than he does; this he knows. What he doesn't know is that his gloating days are numbered. Internet shopping has just come of age.

It's become commonplace that you can save a small fortune buying stuff over the



Hoojit.co.uk
£386.99

Kelkoo.com
£404.83

IDEO PROCESSING

DVD VIDEO

0:00:04

V.S.S.

CINEMA

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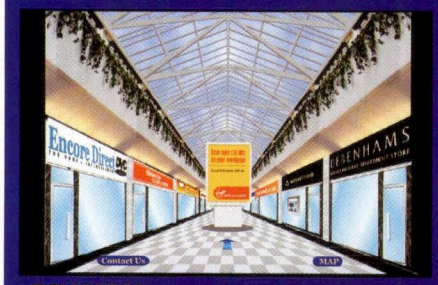
SHOPPING PORTALS

If a shopping agent fails you, one of these may net you a bargain



3DSHOPPER *www.3dshopper.net*
An attempt to create a 3D shopping environment – stroll through the virtual mall and when you see a shop you like, click on it.

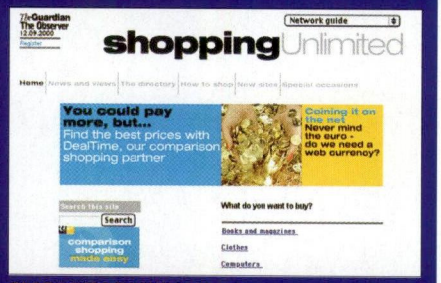
BARCLAYSQUARE *www.barclaysquare.co.uk*
No nightingales, just online shops. You can secure some good buys here but we'd still like to see more shops covered.

BEST OF BRITAIN
www.thebestofbritish.com
Plenty of thoroughly British fare to be had at this thoroughly British portal.

CLASSIC ENGLAND SHOPPING MALL
www.classicengland.co.uk
Claims to offer everything from cured bacon to a cure for cold feet sufferers. If you want something typically British, also try here.

SAFESTREET SHOPPING CENTRE
www.safestreet.co.uk
Claims to offer 'a High Street of unique independent stores.' There were 140 at the last count but more are being added every week.

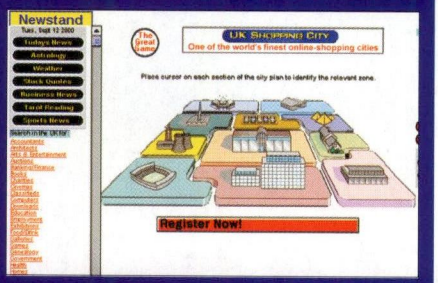
SHOPS ON THE NET
www.shopsonthenet.com
Around 8,000 virtual shops are ready and waiting to take your money at Europe's largest shopping portal.



SHOPPING UNLIMITED
www.shoppingunlimited.co.uk
Another in the Guardian newspaper's *Unlimited* series. It's just added a comparison facility.

TIMEOUT SHOPPING
www.timeout.com/shopping
Advice and a list of over 10,000 shops, plus *TimeOut*'s 250 best online shops.

UK SHOPPING CITY *www.ukshops.co.uk*
If you're looking for a crane to hire or some other heavy-duty device, this will tell you where you can get one. Not so good on the basics.



SHOPS ON THE NET
www.thevirtualmall.co.uk
Choose your floor (there's even a bargain basement) and find your site. You'll find a handy link to Kelkoo here, too

Online shoppers are now spending 25% more than they need to

Internet, but the truth is that unless you're prepared to spend time trawling the Net, you might be better off sticking with the bricks and mortar of Bob's Bargains. Research shows that online shoppers are spending 25 percent more than they need to by mistakenly assuming all Internet-based shopping is cheap. So why doesn't someone develop a site that trawls all the online shops and comes up with the best prices?

Entrepreneur Philip Wilkinson asked himself that very question and launched Shopgenie in 1999. In June this year it merged with a Parisian company to become Kelkoo.com, one of the largest of a new breed of price comparison sites which aim to find the best deals from hundreds of online traders. This year, Kelkoo researched the different asking prices for a range of goods on the High Street and Net. They found that UK's e-consumers could be £82million out of pocket if they didn't shop wisely.

So how does price comparison work? Say you want a copy of Stephen Pressfield's new book *Tides of War*; books have been in the vanguard of e-commerce, reportedly accounting for 54 percent of all online trade, not least because shoppers are convinced that books cost less on the Net. Searching for *Tides of War* on Kelkoo reveals that prices range from £7.99 to £11.44 at online bookshops. The cheapest copy is on sale at Alphabet Street, where shipping is free and you save £2 on the cover price. That doesn't mean you should buy all your books from Alphabet Street. For starters, it specialises in recently published books; if you want an older book, you might want to look elsewhere.

Comparison sites are big business in the US, where they are gatekeepers to 21 percent of all Internet sales. Not surprisingly, a number of sites are getting in on the action in the UK. According to Fletcher Research, online shopping will be worth £3.1 billion by 2003 in the UK alone. Comparison sites are now popping up everywhere. As we were researching this article, Virgin launched its Virgin Shopper service (***www.virgin.com***), the Guardian's Shopping Unlimited (***www.shoppingunlimited.co.uk***) added a comparison facility and Asda's ValueMad service (***www.value mad.com***) was extended to cover wine.

But can they really find the lowest price? And which of them checks the greatest range of products? We put together a list of 10 diverse goodies, from a Flat Eric toy to the EMSL30 microwave from Sanyo, and put the price comparison sites to the test.

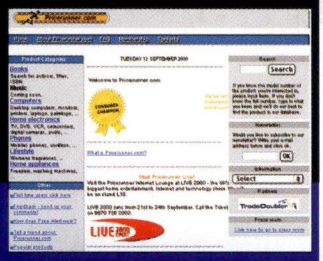
First up was UK DealTime, which was launched off the back of a successful US site last year. It's lagging a little behind its parent site in terms of the range of products available, but the search engine jumps Stateside if it can't find the product in the UK database. It did this when we looked for books and CDs, but allowed us to specify UK hits only. With other products, though, the hits were in the US, where the prices were cheap, but the shipping costs weren't displayed and might wipe out the potential savings. DealTime was unique amongst the sites surveyed in that, once you register with them, you can conveniently order all your goods and track your orders from the site.

Price Challenge was our next port of call. It differs

HIGH ST: £15.99
LOWEST: £12.97

He's flat, he's Eric and his cost varies depending on where you go

HUMAN vs COMPUTER



Could a comparison site beat a human bargain hunter?

THE CHALLENGE We pitted recently launched comparison site Pricerunner against *the net*'s intrepid shopper and staff writer Sarah Wakely. Both were asked to get the best Internet price for a Sony Wega widescreen TV (the KV28FX20). Sarah was allowed 20 minutes surfing time to return her best price.

WHO WON? Pricerunner, by £4.10. It returned two prices of £635 and £691.66 in 45 seconds, the lowest from ***www.value-direct.co.uk***, which offers free delivery. In 20 minutes, Sarah surfed nine sites and found a best price of £639.10, offered by Empire at ***www.electricalsdirect.co.uk*** (delivery is at least £3.50).

from the other sites in that it doesn't compare the prices of specific products, but tells you the cheapest sites in specific categories. It's an independent outfit which also compares supermarket prices and cheap phone-calls. It makes all its money from advertising, as does UK Shop Smart, which claims to be the UK's third largest shopping portal. That might well be the case, owing to its impressive directory, but its range of products is limited and, although it seemed to search a lot of shops, only a few results were returned.

Kelkoo was next, and was impressive until it compared flight prices; the results could be beaten on Teletext or by specialist travel dotcoms.

One of the main concerns with price comparison is to ensure that you're comparing like with like, and one of the main drawbacks of Hoojit, the last site on test, was the vague product descriptions. The search engine was also disappointing, bringing up a packet of Big Korn Bites, among over 100 irrelevant hits, when we tried to find a copy of the Toploader album *Onka's Big Moka*. Other products proved equally elusive, and browsing by category was even slower. Hoojit did, however, redeem itself a little by coming up with the lowest price for the Panasonic DVD player.

The clearest result from the test was that no one site found all the cheapest deals.

HIGH ST: £5.99
LOWEST: £5.42

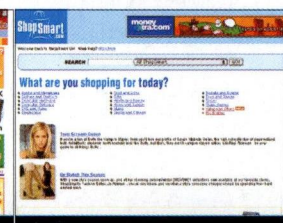
Also bear in mind that some online and high street outlets say they will now match a lower Net price of a product if they have it in stock and you have proof of the price, the esteemed John Lewis being one of them.

So, you need never be knowingly undersold to ever again. Get shopping.

www.dealtime.co.uk

www.pricechallenge.co.uk

uk.kelkoo.com



uk.shopsmart.com

www.hoojit.co.uk

Comparison sites test results

The Goods	High St	DealTime	PriceChallenge	KelkooUK	Shop Smart	Hoojit.co.uk
Le Creuset Fondue Set	£64	£50.85 (4)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/f
Flat Eric Cuddly Toy	£15.99	£16.95 (1)	n/a	£12.97 (2)	n/a	£17.99 (1)
Onka's Big Moka by Toploader CD	£12.99	£8.99 (7)	£8.99*	£8.99 (9)	£11.48 (4)	£13.99 (2)
Tides of War by Stephen Pressfield Book	£9.99	£7.99 (10)	£7.99*	£7.99 (10)	£7.99 (8)	£7.99 (4)
Sanyo EM-SL30 Microwave and Grill	£230-250	£249.95 (4)	£249.95*	£222.95	n/a	£233.15 (2)
HP Jornada 680 Pocket PC	£551	£501.34 (5)	£545.37	n/f	n/a	£508 (4)
Panasonic RV60EBS DVD	£449.99	£404.83 (2)	n/f	£404.83 (1)	n/a	£386.99 (1)
£20,000 Loan	n/a	n/a	8.9%AER	8.5% AER (24)	n/a	n/a
Flight to Venice	£106	n/a	n/a	£119 (16)	n/a	n/a
X-Men Movie 6in action figure	£5.99	£5.42 (1)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/f

ABOUT OUR TEST: The price shown by each site figure is lowest price in UK pounds. The figure in brackets is the number of retailers compared.An asterisk means that shipping is included. n/a means the category of product is not covered by the site. n.f. means the category is covered but the item was not found. Note there is no second figure for Price Challenge because the site directs you to the cheapest retailer within certain categories and doesn't compare individual items.). High street prices are based on those we found ourselves and may vary.

How the sites shape up

Ease of use	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★
Speed	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★
Reliability	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★
Range of products	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★	★★★★
Finding lowest price	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★
Independent of retailers	✘	✔	✘	✔	✘
Order goods from site	✔	✘	✘	✘	✘
Email notification of price changes	✔	✘	✘	✘	✘
Search facility	✔	✘	✔	✔	✔
Shop directory	✔	✘	✔	✔	✘
Buying guides/reviews	✔	✔	✔	✔	✘
Overall Verdict	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★	★★★

Comparing is natural

Books | Games | Computing

www.kelkoo.com

Compare prices before you buy.

Flights | Music | Wine

At Kelkoo.com you can compare prices at leading online stores before you buy to make sure you find the very best deals available, or you can browse through 25,000 worldwide stores, and check out the latest bargains of the day.

DDB

A Surv Guide

Whether you're trying for a GSCE or a baby; looking for a house or a party; or waiting for a bus or your one true love to arrive, the Net can help you from the cradle to the grave. We've gathered all the sites you'll ever need in our indispensable guide to life. So don't even think of leaving the womb without it

ivor's to Life

Coming Soon To A Screen Near You...

...A Virtual Shopping Experience That Really Is The Cat's Whiskers!

We all love to shop, don't we? Moving from shop to shop, seeing and touching and feeling the goods on offer, exploring new outlets and discovering new and exciting places. Nowadays, everyone is exploring on-line shopping. But the 2D world of the Web can be pretty flat and uninspiring for the shopper seeking out new and vibrant experiences.

Enter EC Land, a unique 3D environment that combines a real shopping experience with the convenience of the Internet. Its attractive virtual environment is clean, uncluttered and uncrowded, and allows you to shop from your home or desktop. Users can wander around the mall to find new stores or familiar haunts. Declan the EC Land Cat will act as your Tour Guide, offering help and advice and showing alternative ways to move around the mall.

So why not find out what EC Land has to offer right now, and enjoy a shopping experience that's certain to leave you purring.

ec LAND

A NEW DIMENSION IN ON-LINE SHOPPING

www.ecland.co.uk

1 IN THE BEGINNING

You're born, the midwife gives you the thumbs up and it's time to get going...

CONCEPTION One day it'll be your turn to produce a beautiful dribbling offspring, so here's where to begin... We've all heard those words 'trying for a baby' and at ***www.b4baby.com*** you can find out what they mean in full. The site's usefully broken down into two sections, Preconception and Pregnancy, and if something's not covered in either of these you can ask the site's experts. ***www.babycentre.co.uk*** is another good one if you're trying to conceive.

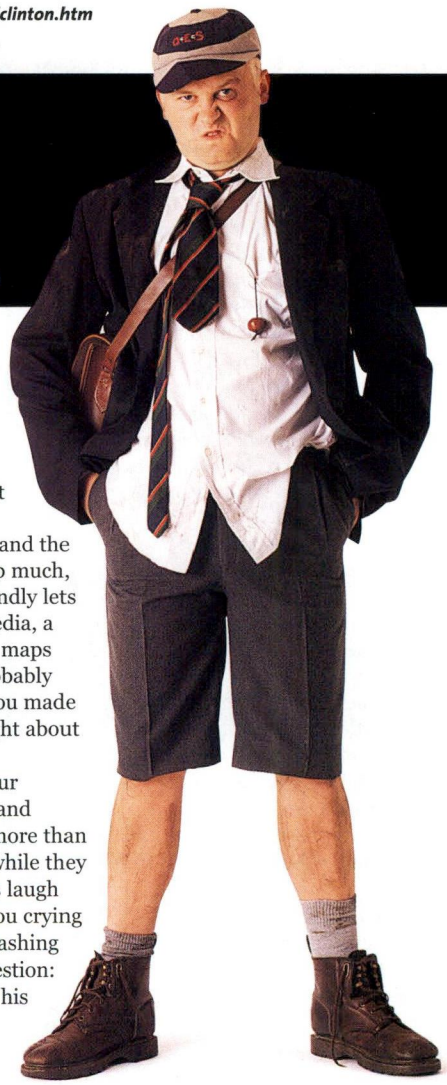
babycentre.co.uk: you could start here

AFTER THE BIRTH If you're successful it lists baby stages, such as when they'll get up, smash things, puke and start screaming 'Dada!' at you. Now, supposing a baby's on the way, take a look at ***www.babycity.co.uk*** which features another Ask the Experts section, what to do and buy ahead of the sprog's arrival and articles such as Breast is Best; for when the baby's born, obviously.

SHOPPING Two sites that are good for shopping for the new baby (hey, only another 18 years to go) are ***shopping.yahoo.comBaby_Care*** which is especially good for nappies, giving a whole new meaning to the phrase 'log on'. The site's also there for carriers, baby food, linens, nursery supplies, strollers, toys and even a vintage four-poster crib for your sleeping darling The Musical Clown looks great fun too. Pull the cord, stretch the clown and *It's a Small World* fills the room, so it's a bit like playing The Orb to baby in the chill-out cot. ***www.babyworld.com*** is the other site that's there to be shopped from.

BE WARNED To see what a terrible baby you could produce if you don't give them enough love and attention, have a look at ***www.personalsingles.combubbalanddancingbaby billclinton.htm*** which shows a dancing Bill Clinton baby. Scary.

A Survivor's Guide to Life



2 LEARNING CURVE

School. It's necessary if sometimes painful – and it goes on and on

EDUCATION Now they're at school age, but when the little brats aren't annoying teacher, what's to do with them? You could get them online at ***www.bbc.co.ukchildrens***, where they can play a daily quiz and games, read showbiz news and go to BBC Children's TV links.

DAYS OUT ***www.planit4kids.co.uk*** shows the latest events and has competitions, give-aways and a place for kids to trade their second-hand goods. You can also plan days out, as it lists places to go throughout Britain, including those that cater for kids with special needs. If an adventurous day trip doesn't tire them out, you'll just have to put them in front of the computer again. You could do worse than visit ***www.yahooligans.com***, a site which features arts and entertainment, TV, movies, jokes, music, science and nature. Another candidate is ***www.argosphere.net*** which lists activities by age groups.

HOMEWORK Your little cherub may soon start to get some dreaded homework. To save you the embarrassment of admitting you know zilch about Henry VIII's wives, get online to ***www.homeworkelephant.co.uk***. This is the place for research help, interactive revision and help from Agony Elephant, which sounds like it may be Vanessa Feltz. Also, to save you confessing that your book collection – a copy of *High Fidelity* and the *Viz Annual* – won't help much, Homework Elephant kindly lets you access an encyclopedia, a thesaurus, a translator, maps and famous quotes (probably not including the one you made in the pub the other night about just 'having the one').

kidsjokes.co.uk: it's way it tells them

JOKES A sense of humour will often be necessary and ***www.kidsjokes.co.uk*** has more than 5000 jokes. However, while they may make younger kids laugh they'll probably leave you crying and older teenagers smashing up their bedrooms (Question: 'How did the farmer fix his jeans?' Answer: 'With a cabbage patch!').

A Survivor's Guide to Life

3 HORMONE TROUBLE

Things are changing fast. All *sorts* of things. And the whole world is against you. It's *SO* unfair...

MUSIC As your darling little one reaches his/her angst-ridden, moody teenage years things could get tough. One thing to keep in mind is that music is all to a teenager. ***www.worldpop.co.uk*** has everything from video interviews with stars such as Madonna, Oasis, Limp Bizkit... and, er, Emma Bunting, to gig info, chat rooms, reviews, message boards, plus news via email. If your youngster is into dance tunes, get on the guest list at ***www.muzik.co.ukmuzikweekly***. Another music site worth going to is ***www.dotmusic.com***. It has news, charts, artists, reviews, features, and a shop.

SPORT Instead of drinking and moshing, some teenagers develop an unhealthy interest in playing sport. ***www.sporting-life.com*** gives all the latest sports news, including cricket, rugby, golf and, of course, football, complete with pictures of superstar players celebrating goals with their shirts off. There's also betting news, for those teenagers starting out on a lifetime of losing their shirts in an altogether different manner.

Dotmusic.com: sounds like a good site

GOOD ADVICE ***www.infoyouth.com*** offers career, further education, youth activity and gap-year information. Main features are its in-depth guide to every university in Britain, profiles of hundreds of different careers, the lowdown on Britain's biggest companies and a rucksack-full of international gap-year opportunities. There's also advice and support in discussion forums, as well as university and careers news.

COMMUNICATION Teenagers are known for locking themselves away in bedrooms. To ensure communication with the outside world, log on to ***www.dubit.co.uk*** which includes chat and articles written by UK teens. Another site that will keep any teenager out of trouble – at least for a while – is ***www.thej.net*** with games, music, TV, film and sport. The chat rooms are fun, especially Flirtersparadise and Chillout.

SEX Sex: teenagers love it. ***www.iwannaknow.org*** is a bit American but worth checking out for its articles that let you know what others are thinking about sex. It also has less 'sexy' features on subjects such as syphilis.

STUDENT LIFE ***www.student-world.co.uk*** is earnest but dull, with news, sport and staid but worthwhile features on subjects such as securing your home. The Darwin Awards are worth a visit: they celebrate the Theory of Evolution by featuring those who improve the gene pool by (unwittingly) ruling themselves out of a chance to contribute to its future due to excessive buffoonery. When it comes to renting, we won't recommend any sites, landlords not always being known for their honesty. Sorry, but you're on your own on that one.

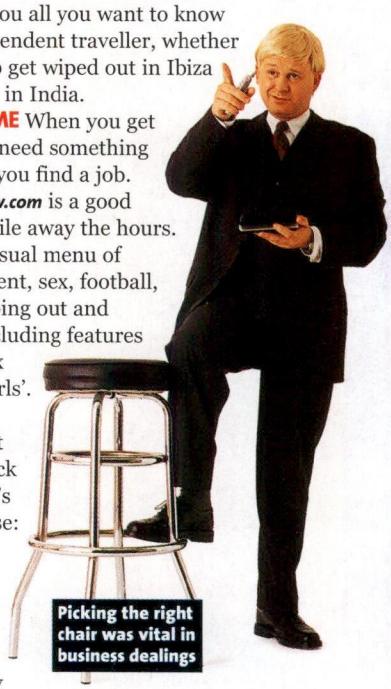
The future of our great nation... God have mercy

4 WORKING ON IT

Time to get a 'proper' job. You don't really want to but there's shiny gadgets and beer to be paid for.

TRAVELLING Before settling down, you'll likely have the sense to see more of the world. ***www.lonelyplanet.com*** is the best place to begin. It will tell you all you want to know as an independent traveller, whether you want to get wiped out in Ibiza or drop out in India.

KILLING TIME When you get back you'll need something to do until you find a job. ***www.liv4now.com*** is a good place to while away the hours. It has the usual menu of entertainment, sex, football, humour, going out and fashion, including features such as 'Sex with Fat Girls'. If you keep putting that job off, check out the site's Daily Excuse: things like 'I'd love to, but I'm staying home to work on my cottage-cheese sculpture' are bound to work down at the Job Centre.


Picking the right chair was vital in business dealings

LADS TOGETHER ***www.danspank.co.uk*** can easily become addictive. Dan Spank is a twentysomething fella not unlike most twentysomethings in Britain. Except he writes about it in his daily diary, and it's very funny too. Plus whatever Dan does you can too, so if he gets tickets to go to a gig, so can you. There's also an amusing section called Household Tip showing a pic of the poor state of one of your homes, the Knackered Chef offers recipes for the bone idle and steaming drunk, and there's also a swap shop, new gizmos page and fine links.

JOB SEARCH Oh dear, don't despair if you're skint for too long – ***www.gisajob.com*** will most probably nut you between the eyes with a job before you can hit the Escape button. It usually has something like 100,000 vacancies posted and more than 6,000 agencies are on board. You can search for a job or submit your CV.

MARRIAGE Now it's that stage when many settle down. ***www.icircle.co.ukchannelsaskanna Default.asp*** is for females, but you can sneak in and find out what goes on in girls' minds. It also lists useful support organisations.

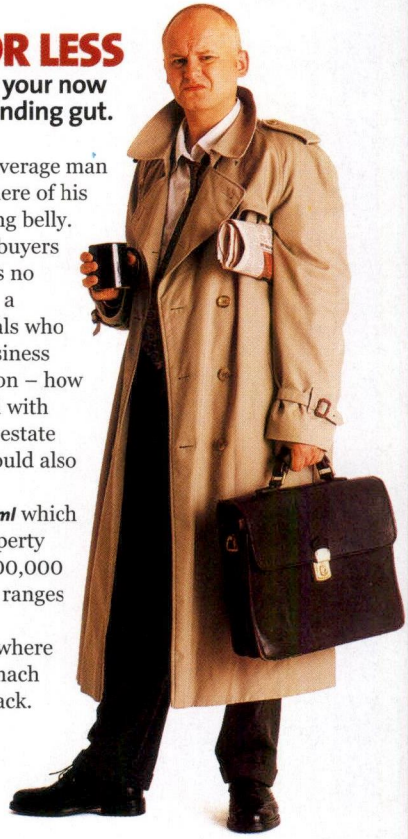
You finally meet the woman of your dreams, you may even be deviant and get married. ***www.webwedding.co.uk*** is another girly site but great for help with wedding plans. Other pages include tips on receptions, photography, diamond and wedding rings (now you know why you work so hard), honeymoons and hen nights. ***www.weddingguide.co.uk*** is a similar site but has features just for the groom.

let me entertain you
Highest chart position: 3
Weeks in chart: 12
Stay on top with dotmusic
Whatever you want to know on whatever kind of music, you'll find it all at dotmusic. With 14 different charts, audio clips, news, archived stories, interviews, artist discographies and biographies you could easily lose yourself in the music.
dotmusic
what's your sound?
dotmusic .com

A Survivor's Guide to Life

5 SETTLING FOR LESS

Buy a home, split it with your now ex-wife, battle that expanding gut.



HOUSE HUNTING Now the average man at this age will want somewhere of his own to put his ever-expanding belly. By far the best site for homebuyers is ***www.hometruths.co.uk***. It has no vested interest in selling you a property as most professionals who 'help' in the homebuying business do. There's a solicitors' section – how they see you and how to deal with them, with similar pages for estate agents and surveyors. You could also move your mouse and try ***www.homemovers.co.ukindex.html*** which says it's the UK's largest property database. With more than 200,000 houses in all areas and price ranges they could be right.

FITNESS As middle age hits, where once you had a six-pack stomach you now notice it's a party pack. Do something about it at ***www.fitnesspeak.co.uk*** which delivers fitness equipment to your door. Whether you're after an exercise bike, a rowing machine, a treadmill – or all three if things are really bad – you can order them online (and without leaving your couch!). But you've got to feel sorry for the poor buggers who have to deliver it all.

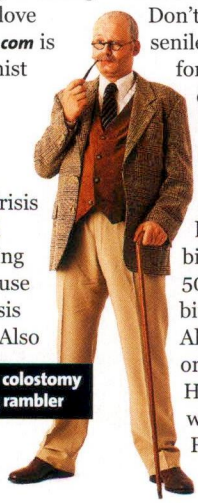
DIVORCE Oh dear, it only seems like yesterday that you fell in love and got hitched – and now you're being ditched. ***www.uniqueyou.co.uk*** will support you through divorce and separation, providing advice on issues such as financial, legal and emotional. ***www.divorceuk.com*** is useful too, as is ***www.ncds.org.ukinfo.htm***. The Divorce Recovery site at ***www.drw.org.uk*** also has a list of local contacts.

TICKETS Okay, got that out of the way – now it's time to party again! Or at least get out of the house. Your route to getting out is at ***www.ticketmaster.co.uk*** with tickets for everything from West End shows to gigs and sporting events. Go on, get out there before you slide into the sixth stage of man: Old Git. And you don't want to become Boring Old Git.

6 OVER THE HILL

Your body might not work quite as well as it used to, but at least you're wiser now. At least you should be...

MIDLIFE CRISIS Well it doesn't all go downhill from here, at least not as quickly as gravity is taking hold of your jowls and love handles. ***www.best years.com*** is written by a US columnist called Mike Bellah and includes his essays on midlife, as well as a questions and answers section and a Midlife Crisis Forum. It's pretty good and deals with everything from coping with a spouse or parent in midlife crisis to surviving your own. Also for midlifers on this site is The Best Year's Booknook, which, in association with ***amazon.com***, gives an opportunity to find some great value midlife-oriented books.



The colostomy bag rambler

Don't let your impending senile dementia let you forget its links page either.

PRESENTS Cheer yourself up and buy a gift at ***www.overthehillgifts.com***, which has gifts for milestone birthdays: 40th birthday; 50th birthday; 60th birthday (you get the idea). All of which can be ordered online from the States. How can you afford to live without their 'Nifty at Fifty' socks, unless you're 60, that is.

7 THE FINAL CURTAIN

You've put all your affairs in order and picked out your headstone. But you're not prepared to go quietly into the night, oh no...

AGE OLD REMEDY You're ancient now, dribble like a baby, can't recall who you are and your skin looks like you've stayed in the bath all your life. And sex is just a distant memory. Don't worry, things can only get better... ***www.guideforlife.com*** is your one-stop Web site for all things to do with ageing, getting ill, dying and funerals. It's well put together but it makes morbid reading. It could almost be the death of you. No headstone has been left unturned with comprehensive sections entitled Planning Ahead, Health Issues, Mobility and Independence, Care and Support, When Someone Dies, Coping with Loss, Finance, Funding and Law.

RELAX Of course, it's best not to become ill, so how about a relaxing holiday. At ***www.sagaholidays.com*** you'll discover a small but representative selection from Saga's full range of holidays for people aged 50 and over. However, prevention is better than cure. ***www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk*** puts you straight on to a two-year waiting list then into a corridor on a fold-up bed by an old-fashioned radiator on full blast. Only joking. In fact it's a decent site with many links and a good guide to treating common symptoms at home. There's also an A to Z to the NHS and a 'body map' which reveals more about various ailments.

PROBLEMS Do you dribble after urinating? You need ***www.embarrassingproblems.co.uk*** – the aim of this site is to help you deal with health problems that are difficult to discuss with anyone. If things get too bad though, head for a home where you can be mollycoddled by lovely nurses all day, and night if you play your cards right, you dirty old man. Associated Nursing Services has more than 50 Nursing Centres in the UK and you can locate one at ***www.anspl.co.uk***.

STICK TO THE ISSUES Other sites for silver surfers to check out are ***www.walkingstickshop.co.uk*** for a selection of 3,000 handmade walking sticks. ***www.the-retirement-site.co.uk*** contains useful answers to financial questions that may crop up in retirement. For news on ageing issues go to ***www.ageconcern.org.uk***. You'd be sensible to visit ***www.theoldie.co.uk*** too for the online version of *The Oldie* magazine. Have fun in your old age and remember, heaven online is not so bad anyway. When we looked it up, we discovered a site for the London nightclub of the same name, as well as a swingers' site and even one for Gail Porter. Thank you God...

I know where it's at
fill me in
Get all the latest with dotmusic
Find out what's going on in the music world as it happens with our email service. See live webcasts and concerts, read our pages of reviews and listen to tracks weeks before they're released. If it's the latest you're after, you've just found it.
dotmusic
what's your sound?
dotmusic
.com

Halloween mask $24

Leave it to the experts to provide decent Halloween fare. This excellent American site has oodles of scary masks, costumes and props, so make a purchase and see your trick or treating *really* pay off this year. Delivery takes about a week, and shipping costs vary. ***www.halloweenmart.com***

MPMan £149.95

This is more like it – an MP3 player in matt aluminium, rather than the usual lightweight, plastic casing. The Saehan MPMan35 has 20 pre-set radio stations, 32Mb memory, voice recorder and more. And it's yours in 24 hours, p&p zilch, from MP3Players. ***www.mp3players.co.uk***

RETAIL THERAPY

Halloween is approaching, so go trick or treating in style – fiery eyes optional

Jewellery from £4

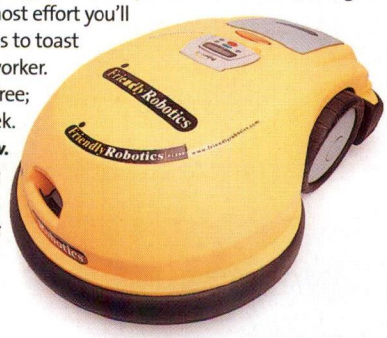
Add a bit of sparkle to your life (or belly button) with this funky jewellery from the piercings specialists: glitter in places you didn't know you could. P&p is £2 – delivery in a week. ***www.coldsteel.co.uk***

Sandwich maker £18

Jolly up your kitchen with this mad cow toasted sandwich maker. Delivery is within seven days and p&p is £2.95. Sarnies will never be the same again. ***www.emccord.co.uk***

Robotic mower £499.99

Praise be to the god of laziness: here is a mower that cuts the grass by itself – just programme the patch that needs mowing. After that, the most effort you'll expend is lifting a glass to toast the miracle worker. Delivery is free; allow a week. ***www.gadgetshop.co.uk***



Plug £13.50

Make bath times more fun by adding a touch of hilarity in the form of the Mr Suicide bath plug; laugh merrily as he floats next to you in the water. This Alessi design can be yours within 72 hours, and p&p is 10 percent of the item price.

www.maelstrom.co.uk

Contact lenses £39

Really put fire in your eyes courtsey of these contact lenses. You can choose from wolf and reptile to the St George's Cross and even an EU version if you're really weird. Delivery is free and takes about seven days.

www.cluboptique.com

Mousepad £27

This high density plastic pad takes mousing into the new millennium with its unique surface. Order online and it will be with you in 2-3 days; p&p is £2.77. ***www.everglide.co.uk***

BT Airway £468.82

This is a handy little gadget and no mistake. The Airway enables you to have a wireless connection to your computer – plug a little box into your machine, then wander hither and thither with this handset, complete with access to your computer. ***www.bt/airway.com***

EBarney £49.99

Barney mania continues with this pink stuffed Internet version – plug him into a PC and download personalised activities for the kids from the Web site. Thankfully, squeeze his hand and he shuts up. Available from online toy shops at the end of October. ***www.mybarney.com***

THE NET'S TOP TIPS FOR ONLINE SHOPPING

Keep to our simple guidelines, and there's no reason why online shopping should end in a puddle of tears

■ **CHECK THE SITE IS SECURE** A small padlock will appear in the bottom left of your browser to show that you can safely send credit card details through the site. Your Web browser will also tell you whether a site is secure or not when you enter it.

■ **SHOP WITH BRAND-NAME COMPANIES** As with any shopping, you're better off with a company you've actually heard of.

■ **CHECK DELIVERY TIMES AND CHARGES** Companies should tell you the delivery charge if there is one on their site. If you live in the Highlands and Islands or Ireland, you may find that free delivery does not apply.

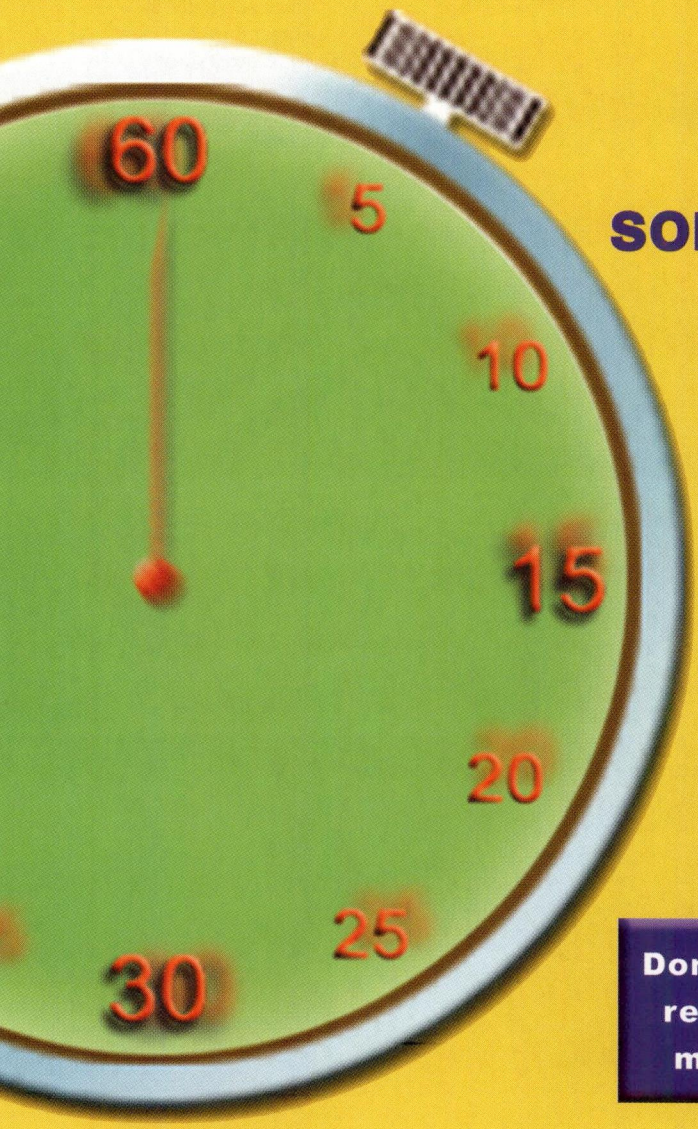
■ **NEVER SEND ANYTHING BY EMAIL** If a site asks for card details by email, don't oblige. It's far, far easier for emails to be intercepted.

■ **PRINT THE CONTRACT** This is the only permanent record of your purchase, so make sure you keep it, along with your order number and other details. Don't forget: if it's a UK site, you have the same consumer rights as you do in the High Street.

■ **IF IT GOES WRONG, DON'T WORRY** Contrary to scare stories, online shopping is safer and very often cheaper than traditional methods – and it's in the online store's interest to sort any problems out quickly.

PHOTOGRAPHY: NICK WRIGHT

Get yours



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FREE email forwarding

FREE optional holding page

UNLIMITED technical support

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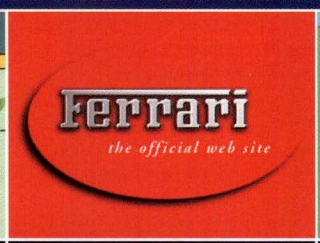
What Website?

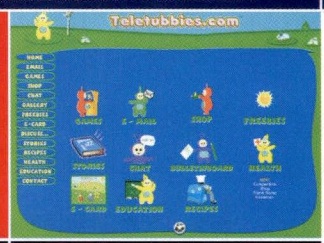
THE BEST OF THE WEB REVIEWED EACH MONTH

LINK TO EVERY SITE FEATURED FROM *www.thenetnow.co.uk*

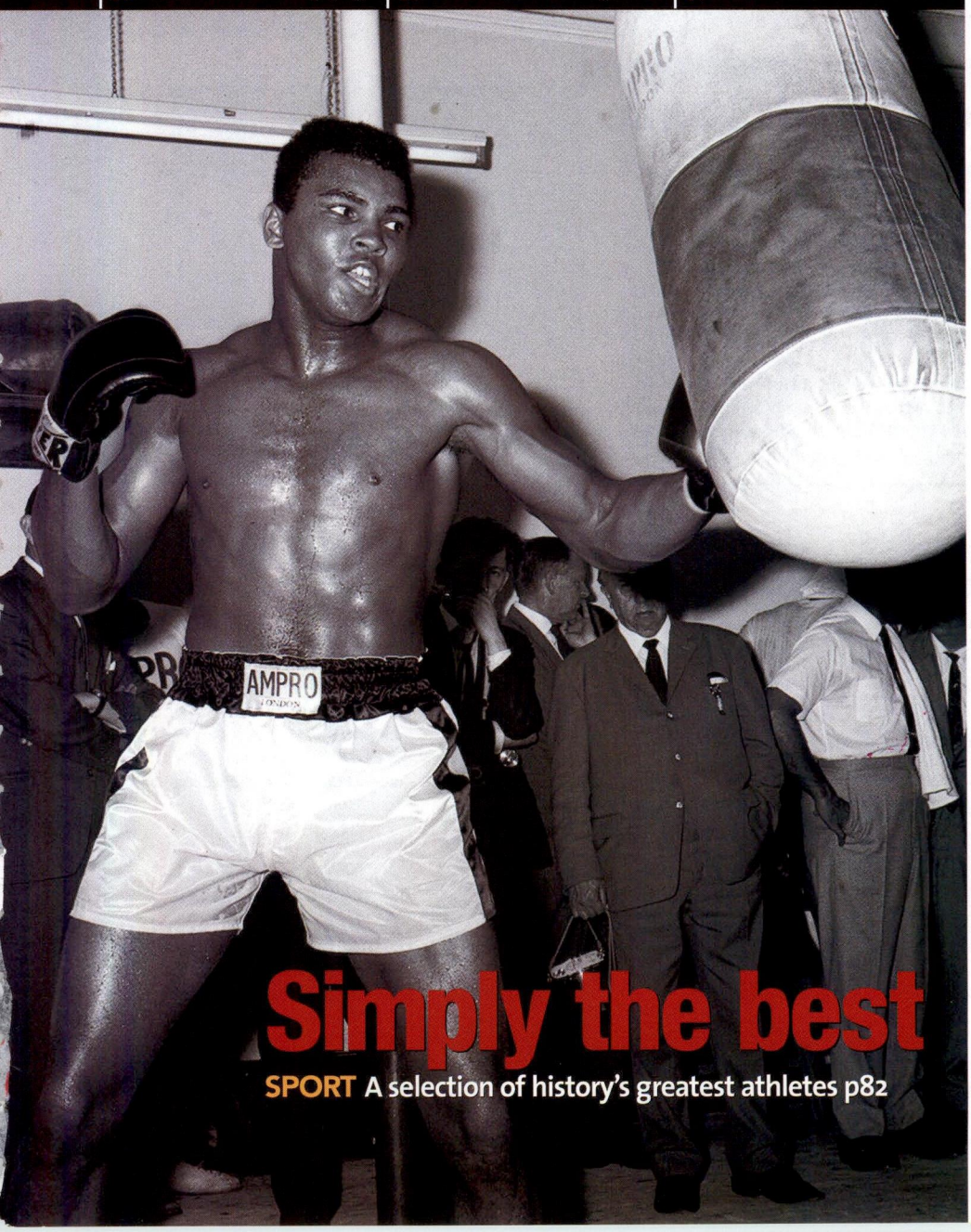
p91 MONEY All-in-one bill paying



p90 CARS AND BIKES Classy motors



p78 TELEVISION Costumed kids' TV



Simply the best

SPORT A selection of history's greatest athletes p82

PICTURE: PA

NOVEMBER 2000

MUSIC 74
Reggae rhythms online

MOVIES 77
Black magic women: witchy horror

TELEVISION 78
What's through the round window? Kids' TV: more than men in furry suits

CELEBRITIES 81
We're all going on a summer holiday...

SPORT ALL-TIME ICONS 82
Records broken, gold medals galore, scoring feats and jaw-dropping talent

SPORT RUGBY LEAGUE 85
Big shoulder pads and bad attitudes; no, not *Dynasty*, it's those 13-a-side boys

NEWS & MEDIA 86
Breaking stories on your desktop

TRAVEL 89
Treat yourself to a weekend jaunt

CARS & BIKES 90
Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's supercar

MONEY 91
Save yourself a bundle on utility bills

HISTORY 93
World War One: from poppies to poets

GAMES 95
Get your pints at the ready, line up those shorts and add some rules: 'Fuzzy duck...'

LEARNING 96
A guide to entertaining ankle-biters

ANIMALS 99
Do your bit online to help our little pals

KIDS 100
Penny for the Guy; bonfires; fireworks; young people having fun – marvellous!

COMPUTERS 103
Enter the realm of virtual worlds...

WEIRD 104
...and then just disappear

NEED TO KNOW 107
Sharp sites on the cutting edge

REGGAE

Netty dreads

There's more to reggae than Bob and a handful of homegrown. One love...

Jammin' Reggae Archives
www.niceup.com ★★★★

One-stop shop for every reggae resource a natty dread could desire. Reggae radio, news, charts, reviews, sound clips from every major reggae label and a links list longer than your arm mean you'll be matting your hair in no time and taking it eeezy. The site may be a little hard to navigate, but where else could you buy Black Uhuru's *Black Sounds Of Freedom* from Spragga Benz's E-Shop?

Bob Marley
www.bobmarley.com ★★★

No reggae round-up would be complete without the man Marley, and even as he smokes the celestial 'erb up in reggae heaven his name and legacy live on. Bob Marley Footwear, as one of the many merchandising adverts here goes, 'Makes you wanna move those dancing feet!'. Crass marketing aside, this site offers everything for the Bobphile, from Eric Clapton and Rita Marley essays to some great, rare pictures.

Reggae Ambassadors Worldwide
www.reggaeambassadors.org ★★★

'Irie!' shouts the opening page joyously. 'You are at the official RAW Web site!' Set up as 'an international network of committed reggae enthusiasts who have joined forces to spread the positive vibes of reggae music', RAW want you to help out in their quest to make roots reggae enjoyed by people the world over. Has plenty of audio downloads, conference details and chat groups.

Dread Head HQ
www.dreadheadhq.com ★★★★

If you're going to be a dedicated reggae fan you're going to have to start growing dreads. Dread Head offers everything the budding locksmith would need, including detailed instructions on growth, plus an online shop selling dread wax and soap. It's a daunting step but worth it – think of the money you'll save on shampoo.

If you're going to be a dedicated reggae fan you have to grow dreadlocks

Patois Dictionary
www.eng.miami.edu/~kbrown/rasta-la.htm ★★★

'Me come yah fi drink milk, me no come yah fi count cow!' For the uneducated, Jamaican patois is as impenetrable a language as Icelandic or Slovenian, but with the aid of Patois Dictionary all will become clear in no time. And if you don't know your patois? Then 'yu a dam Lagga head bud!'.

The Harder They Come
www.islandlife.com/thtc ★★★

Regarded as the greatest reggae film ever made, *The Harder They Come* is, according to some of those social commentator-type fellows, solely responsible for bringing reggae to a worldwide audience. Including an interview with the film's director, Perry Henzell, plus opportunities to buy the film and the killer soundtrack online, THTC is given the true respect and admiration it deserves.

bobmarley.com – for all things Bob

Lee Scratch Perry
www.upsetter.net ★★★★

There aren't many more important figures in dub reggae than Lee Scratch Perry, a man who is as famous for his borderline insanity

THE NET'S FAVOURITE

The Reggae Source
www.reggaesource.com ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

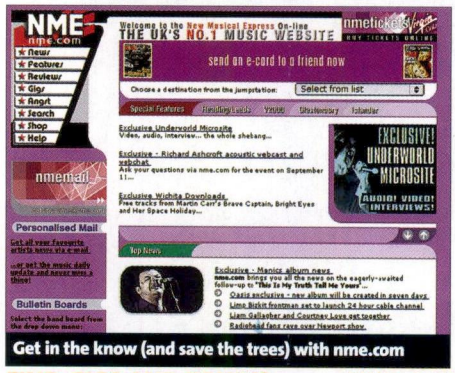
To attempt to cover one of the biggest music movements in the world, a site needs to be as passionate and knowledgeable about reggae as the people who make the music. And The Reggae Source is just that site, with top-notch reviews, charts, tours, artist biogs, features and news ('Beenie, Cham, Madd Anju & Spragga Reigned at Millennium Splash' goes one alluring headline). If you haven't a clue where to start dipping your toes in the sea of reggae, then this will guide you through the dross to get to the golden reggae treats. Jah dem know it.

BEST MUSIC SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

FIND A BAND SITE?
www.ubl.com Go here first for the huge search engine.
www.bigmouth.co.uk UK-specific site with tons of links.
www.musicsearch.com Find artist sites or music services.
wallofsound.go.com Links and features from the US.

READ THE LATEST NEWS AND REVIEWS?
www.rollingstone.com The US publication features extra online content.
www.nme.com *NME*'s online version has a reputation for breaking news.
www.qonline.co.uk Increasingly essential online version of the popular magazine.
www.dotmusic.com British site for rock and pop news.



Get in the know (and save the trees) with nme.com

FIND GIGS AND TOURS?
www.ticketlinks.com Full database of musical events.
www.aloud.com Brilliant search engine for gigs, with tickets too.
www.sceneone.co.uk Easy to use.
www.wayahead.com Reliable and competitively priced tickets.

BUY NEW CDS?
www.yalplay.com Popular store.
www.audiostreet.com A cheap and easy-to-navigate store.
www.boxman.co.uk Easy on the eye.
www.cdnow.com One of the biggest.

FIND OUT ABOUT MP3S?
www.mp3now.com A good MP3 portal now in the UK.
www.mp3place.com Fine database.
mp3.lycos.com Browse the MP3 world.
www.mp3.com Heaps of downloads.

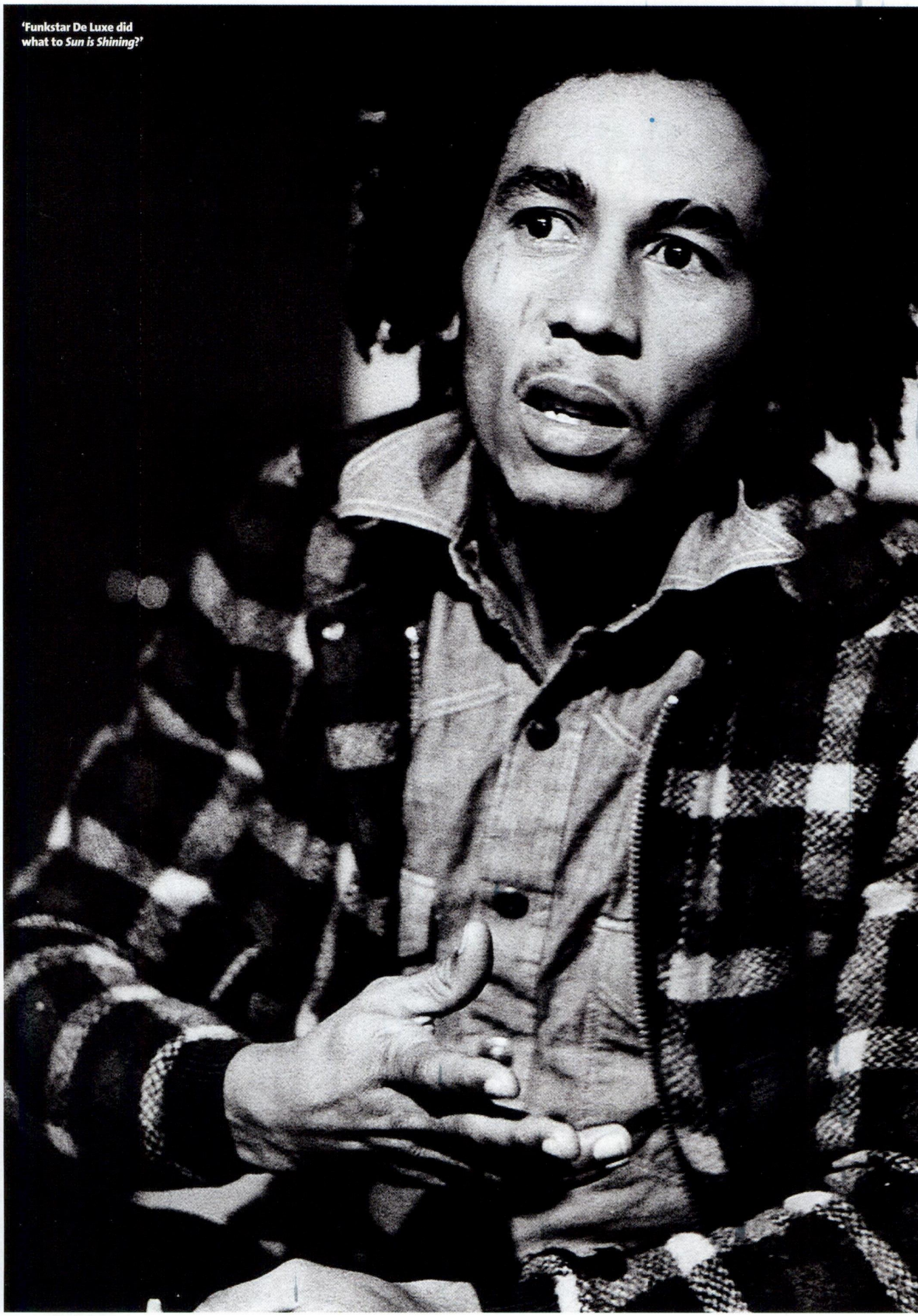
POST MY BAND'S MP3S?
www.crunch.co.uk Signs artists exclusively for the site.
www.peoplesound.com A popular unsigned band portal.
www.vitaminic.co.uk A new MP3 site entering the arena.
www.clickmusic.co.uk Excellent MP3 portal with downloads.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?
rec.music.reggae A great place to find out about events and new artists.

WATCH BANDS ONLINE?
Visit ***www.virtuetv.com*** for details of new RealVideo live shows.

GET CHATTING?
lister.ultrakohl.com Reggae articles, downloadable tunes and chat.

WORDS: SAM UPTON; PICTURES: RETNA



'Funkstar De Luxe did what to *Sun is Shining*?'

REGGAE

GUILTY PARTIES

For putting the dread into dreadlocks

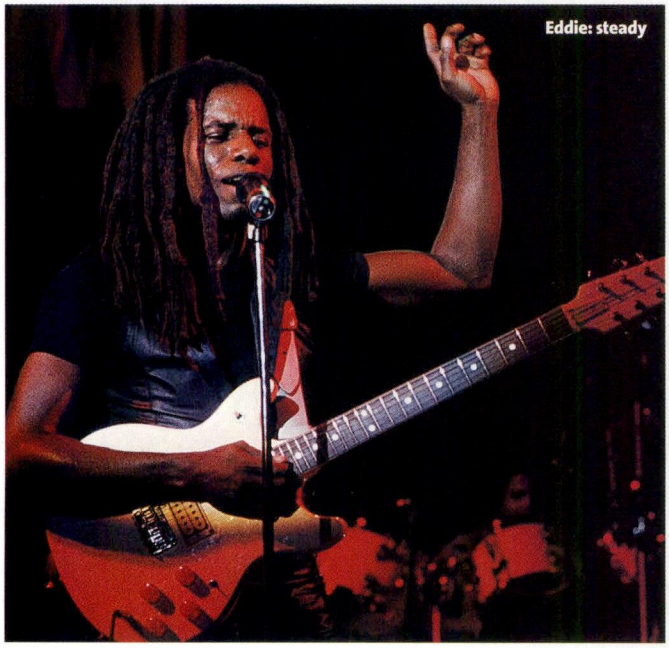
UB40
Brummie reggae-lite chancers whose crowning glory was a song about finding a rat in someone's kitchen. Not the most pleasant bunch, their last feat of note was having a member banged up for armed robbery.

'AMUSING' RASTAMAN HATS
Funny for about five seconds when they first appeared, these wool hats dyed the colours of the Jamaican flag came complete with false dreadlocks sewn in – perfect for those 80s Jim Davidson 'Chalky' impressions.

BOY GEORGE 'EVERYTHING I OWN'
Boy George wasn't a very happy bunny in 1987 – drug problems, depression, relationship breakups, that kind of thing – and releasing this tawdry reggae version of a 70s classic didn't help matters either.

TRUSTAFARIANS
Invariably living in wealthy enclaves, these over-privileged scruffy posh kids would rather wallow in a haze of drug smoke and talk endlessly about Lee Scratch Perry than do something useful – like getting a job.

MADNESS
More ska murderers than reggae maulers, Madness tried their utmost to ruin 50 years of musical history. Righteous songs about oversized trousers, Michael Caine and buying rubber johnnies from the chemist.


Eddie: steady

as for his ground-breaking music production. Here you can read up on the man behind the tunes with a neatly written biography, download some stonking sound files and try to fathom the genius of a man who regularly walked backwards around Kingston striking the ground with a hammer.

Glory Of The Kings
www.geocities.com/SoHo/Exhibit/5889/ ★★★
A page dedicated entirely to Emperor Haile Selassie, leader of the Rastafarian religion. Check out his speeches, the biblical background, plus his expansive stamp gallery. Meanwhile, if you're really keen on being a Rasta, send in some righteous poetry and it'll be published for everyone (including Jah himself) to see.

Dancehallreggae.com Productions
www.dancehallreggae.com ★★★★
Not all reggae is about dreadlocks, spliff and Jah; dancehall – an offshoot of traditional reggae – aims its wares at rudegirls and boys lookin' to strut their sexual stuff across the dancefloor. This fantastic site offers everything for the dancehall fan: up-to-the-minute news, sounds and chat.

WITCHES

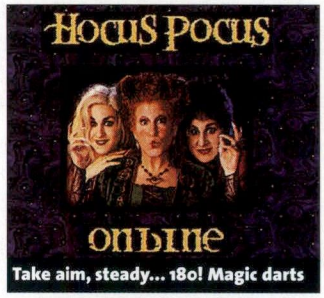
Bad babes 'n' broomsticks

Blair Witch 2 **is just the latest in a long line of film sorceresses to send you scurrying under the duvet**

The Terror Trap: Suspiria
terrortrap.com/suspiria.htm ★★★★
The Terror Trap's a strong, all-round horror film site, but is worth mentioning for its examination of Dario Argento's chiller *Suspiria*. Maggots, rainstorms and dog attacks are par for the course in this tale of a ballerina who enrols in a dance school, only to find it's run by witches. Art house horror, sure, but it'll scare the pants off you.

The Witching Hour
clearillusions.com/thecraft/ ★★★
John Hughes meets John Carpenter in Andrew Fleming's *The Craft*, in which a group of high-school misfits exact revenge on their enemies using a bit of boil and bubble. This fan site offers character profiles and plenty of sound and video downloads, plus the chance to exchange thoughts with the site's creator. Student sorcery with a pop soundtrack – nice.

Hocus Pocus
www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Screen/1232/hocuspocus.html ★★★
Hocus Pocus is like *The Craft*, but the women are older and, erm, more camp. This site provides everything a fan could ask for – downloads, a message board, quotables and whatnot. For non-fans there's always the Webmaster's musings on life and animals: 'To be kissed by a cat is to be kissed by a cherub in a fur coat, only the breath smells of fish'. Obviously.



Take aim, steady... 180! Magic darts

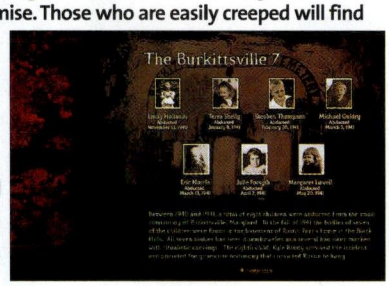
PICK OF THE NET

The Blair Witch Legend: Book of Shadows

www.blairwitch.com/index.html ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

Due to be released simultaneously in England and the US this Halloween, *Blair Witch 2* will no doubt suffer plenty of backlash to the press hyperbole engendered by the original film. Sneak peeks have garnered positive results, however, with critics claiming that director Joe Berlinger has succeeded in adding a new slant to an already well-worn premise. Those who are easily creeped will find plenty to get wide-eyed about at this site. View 'footage' of Kyle Brody, the only child to be spared by murderer Rustin Parr, learn about the spell-conjuring Transitus Fluvii alphabet and the symbolism of the twana stickmen. Don't knock it till you've seen it.



The Disney Villains' Lair

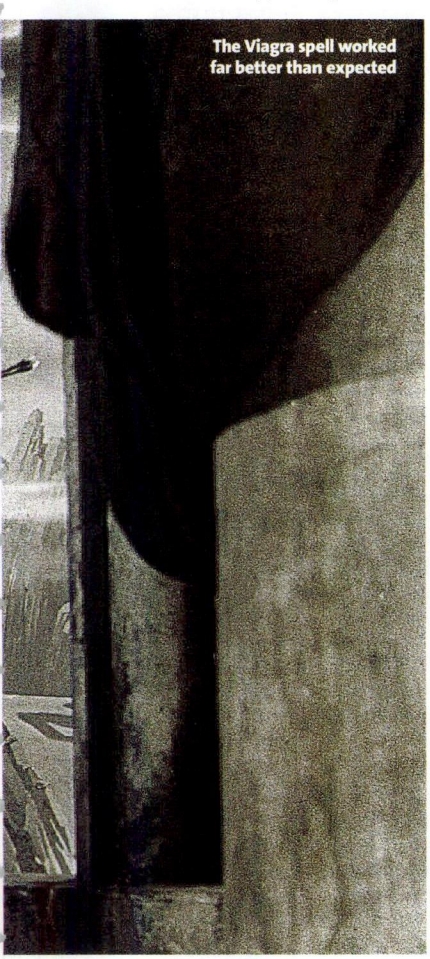
www.geocities.com/Broadway/Alley/5658/snow.html ★★★

Snow White's evil queen has forced us all to keep the hall light on at some point. She was Disney's first feature-length animated villain and the inspiration for the archetypal witchy look.

Practical Magic

practicalmagic.warnerbros.com ★★★★

What was a disappointing film turns out to have an impressive Web site. *Magic* charts the fortunes of two witches (Nicole Kidman and Sandra Bullock) as they try to overturn a spell that prevents them from finding true love. Best of all, you can learn about tarot card readings online.



Harry Potter

harrypotter.warnerbros.com ★★

As we go to press, the newspapers are filled with the face of new Potter actor Daniel Radcliffe. While

Unless you're a real fan, some messages in the chat room may scare you

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone isn't due for release until 2001, you can bet that it's gonna be on everyone's lips until then. This official site is still relatively bare, but it looks promising...

Jim's Wizard of Oz Witches Page

www.geocities.com/~ozfan/witches.htm ★★★

One of the only Oz pages we could find that concentrated on something other than Dorothy and that fleabag Toto. Jim's obsessed with the 1939 musical, but there's some fine facts here.

Lord of the Rings

www.lordoftherings.net/home.html ★★★★

It's not due for release until December 2001, but the film's preview has been downloaded a zillion times by sword & sorcery fanatics. Unless you're a real fan, some messages in the chat room may scare you.

BEST MOVIE SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

GET LATEST NEWS AND RELEASE DATES?

www.popcorn.co.uk British perspective on new releases.
aint-it-cool-news.com Gives the inside track on new films.
www.filmunlimited.co.uk Views and news from *The Guardian*.
uk.imdb.com The bible of online film.
www.urbanchillers.com Scary new horror flicks to download.
www.sightsound.com The place to see *The Quantum Project* – the first full-length, full-budget Net film.

FIND A CINEMA?

www.uci-cinemas.co.uk A fine search engine to locate current screenings.

Check out Virgin Net's 'email-a-friend' film service at *www.virgin.net/movies/*

DECIDE WHAT TO SEE?

cinemachine.com Retrieves film reviews from across the Web.
www.filmreview.co.uk A UK-based review site to rival the Americans.
www.mrqe.com With 19,000+ films.
www.movie-trailers.com Trailers for all the newest films.

FIND OFFICIAL FILM SITES?

www.foxmovies.com Links to 20th Century Fox releases.
www.movies.warnerbros.com Site featuring WB's new films and lost classics.
www.disney.co.uk/DisneyMovies All the kids' faves in one.

WATCH OR POST AMATEUR SHORT FILMS?

www.cinemanow.com A portal site for new films from around the world.
www.getoutthere.bt.com BT-owned amateur movie site.
www.virgin.net/movies/ Take the hassle out of organising a group trip to the cinema with Virgin's 'email-a-friend' service.
cinema.scoot.co.uk Another fine offering from the people behind the comprehensive directory.
www.cineworld.co.uk UK film portal that also includes a cinema finder.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

alt.horror Buy, sell, discuss and hear about the latest horror flick news.

JOIN A MAILING LIST?

If you want to learn more about witches, send an email marked 'more info' to ***www.onelist.com/subscribe.cgi/bdsmwitches***

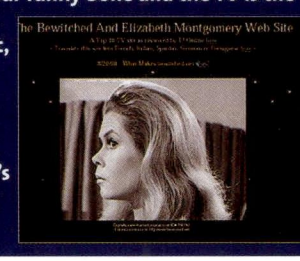
GET CHATTING?

buzzcom.com Get the latest word on all the new movies before they're released over here.

NAUGHTY BUT NICE

YOU'VE GOT ME UNDER YOUR SPELL

Of course, not all witches want to unleash a league of flying monkeys on your arse or let a gang of dead kids throw stones at you. Some would rather tickle your funny bone and the TV is the best place to find these whimsical witches. If you're into female magic, you can check out the *Bewitched* site at *www.bewitched.net*. Younger surfers may find *Sabrina, The Teenage Witch* more familiar and you can find her at the US network's official site (*abc.go.com/tgif/sabrina/sab_home.html*).



WORDS: JENNIFER KEARNS; PICTURES: KOBAL, RETNA

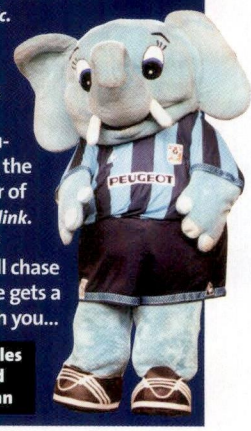
FURRY SUITS

Cliff loved to guest with the ageing Showaddywaddy for their finale of *Under the Moon of Love*

LIVE AUDIENCE

Could be worse

If you're the type of actor who loves to work in a live situation rather than a TV studio, there's a way you can get fresh air and interact with an audience of thousands while still fulfilling the stupid-suit criterion: become a football mascot. There's a thriving support network in the States (*static.mascot.net*), and don't think you won't get the adulation: Carl, the Webmaster of *home.earthlink.net/~bfwd/mascots*, will chase you until he gets a picture with you...



Prince Charles was an avid Coventry fan

'I've got a job for you'

So you're a jobbing actor and your agent gets you a slot on TV – but it's not quite what you imagined

Bungle

www.widdy.demon.co.uk/rainbow/bungle.htm ★★★★

Encapsulating well-intentioned dimwittedness before Homer Simpson was even a sketch, Bungle was aptly named. This sardonic *Rainbow* tribute site features the blundering bear accidentally daubing guest Christopher Lillicrap with paint and, in one of the Internet's most terrifying images, wearing Goldilocks plaits.

Banana Splits

www.dfcom.freeserve.co.uk/hbw/banana ★★★★

'Flippin' like a pancake, poppin' like a cork...'; Fleagle, Bingo, Drooper and Snork lit up Saturday mornings with their mania, designed to fill the holes between substandard cartoons like *The Arabian Knights*. This site takes you back to those 70s daybreaks, when the beagle, gorilla, lion and elephant spent most of their time falling over.

Sesame Street Central

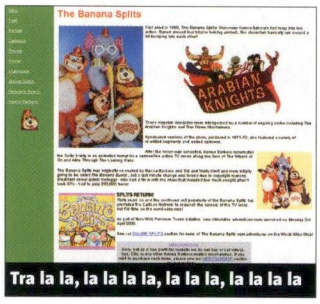
www.ctw.org/sesame ★★★★

The official site is as much fun as you might expect and as garishly colourful as you might fear, just like a kids' site should be. There's a chance to tickle Elmo and a pre-school section for those who might wish to learn – but no answer as to what Big Bird is...

Barney Online

barneyonline.com ★★★★

Would you like a dinosaur to ring your child for only $2.99? Barney-mania swept the US to a worrying extent; British kids have proven harder to brainwash. The limited number of games on this site won't help, but if you'd like a dino for yourself, check out the e-Barney in our Retail Therapy section...



Tra la la, la la la la, la la la, la la la la

Mr Blobby

members.tripod.lycos.nl/blobblob/blob.html ★★★

'Mr Blobby is a very big TV star. He works with the BBC and everybody likes him.' Three facts, all now wrong, which proves how transitory fame is. The pratfalling pink and yellow blancmange from Noel Edmonds' Saturday show somehow garnered enough fans for sites like this and a Christmas No.1, but not enough for the BBC to let Noel see out his contract. Shame.

Wombles

www.mikebatt.com/wombles/ ★★★

Though the TV programme that started it all was animated, Wimbledon's finest really rose to prominence with appearances in the fur – from promoting Mike Batt's string of hits in the 70s to the recent display for the Queen Mother's 100th birthday. Check Batt's site (he was Orinoco, apparently) to see several scary pics of large furry things.

BEST TELEVISION SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

FIND PROGRAMME GUIDES FOR POPULAR SHOWS?

www.snpp.com/episodeguide.html Every *Simpsons* episode ever made is listed here.

www.beef-cake.com At-a-glance guide to *South Park*.

BUY TV MEMORABILIA?

www.tvtoys.com Pick up TV toys, books – and more.

www.noveltytogs.com A great source for *South Park* and *Simpsons* stuff in pounds sterling.

FIND TV LISTINGS?

www.freeserve.com/tvnradio Use the handy instant soap update.

www.radiotimes.beeb.com The listings magazine online.

www.digiguide.co.uk Custom-built UK telly listings.

WATCH TV?

www.virtuetv.co.uk Live events and classic films.

www.dvtv.co.uk The UK's first Net-only station.

www.broadcast.com If it's going live, it'll be listed here.

www.livetv.wwitv.com Hook up with 100+ live TV stations around the world.

FIND TV NEWS AND INFO?

tv.cream.org One of the best sites for old shows.

www.bigglethwaite.com The definitive guide to all the British TV online.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

rec.music.phish Find info on your favourite childhood shows here.

FIND A MAILING LIST?

If nothing makes you happier than a trip down memory lane, send a blank message to ***mailkaleidos-subscribe@egroups.com***, and they'll send you news about upcoming classic TV retrospectives in the UK.

PICK OF THE NET

Teletubbies

www.teletubbies.com ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

A quartet of adults in jumpsuits bumping into each other and gurgling in nearly-words? A mad idea that has so far netted creator Anne Wood £150m. If you ignore the irksome music, this site is impressive in its breadth: with games, recipes, stories, and sounds, it should keep the kiddiwinks happy for a while – until they return to the PlayStation to play the first-ever toddler-friendly console game. And can you guess which four characters star in that?

The Unofficial Dinosaurs Homepage

www.sci.kun.nl/thalia/funpage/television/dinosaurs/index.html ★★★

Jim Henson moved on from small critters like the Muppets and the residents of *Fraggle Rock* to human-sized, erm, tyrannosaurus rexes with this amusing take on working-class families. This fan site mourns the passing of the rexes (the series was cancelled after the number of episodes required to go into syndication were made).

The WackyWorld of Sid & Marty Krofft

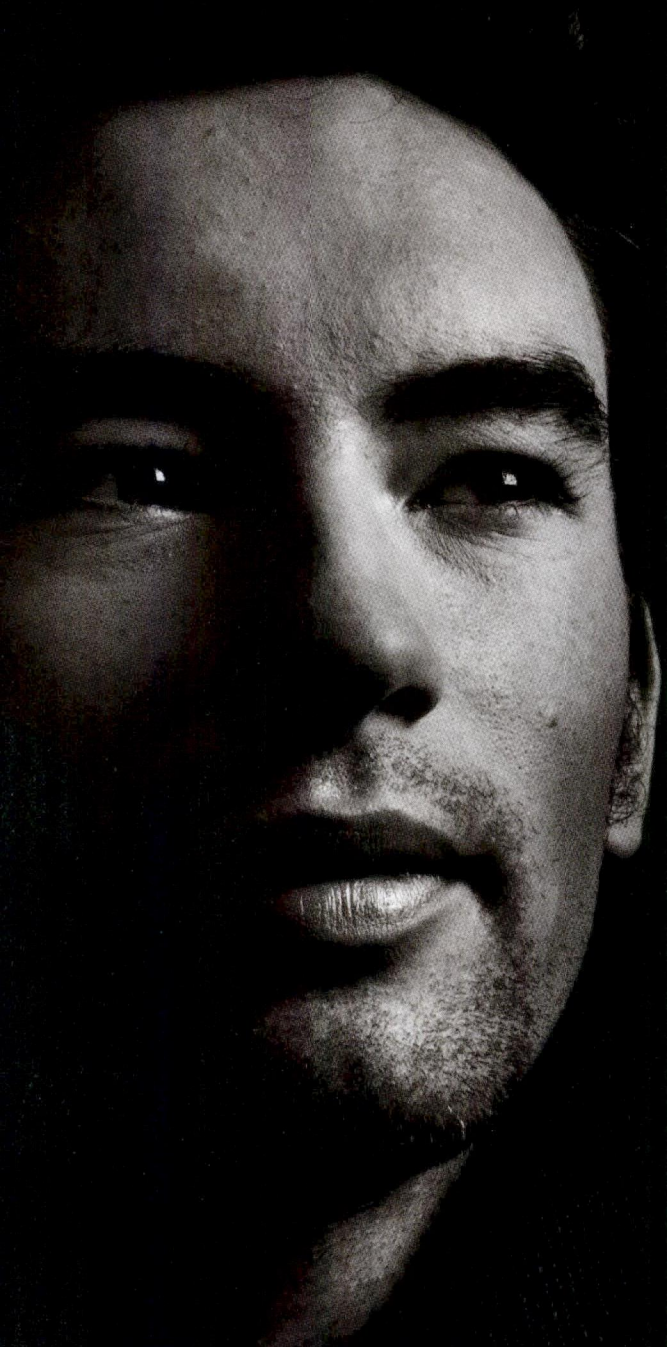
www.krofftville.com ★★★★

The names might be unfamiliar, but these guys cornered the market in headshrinking acid-haze kids' TV starring grown men in weird suits, coming up with a string of hits throughout the 70s in the wake of their first smash, *HR Pufnstuf*. The site is similarly lively, with Shockwave and colours to the fore. Check also the official site at ***www.krofftville.com***, if it ever opens...

Be afraid...

WORDS: GARY PARKINSON; PICTURES: SCOPE FEATURES, EMPICS

GET WHAT YOU WANT FROM THE INTERNET



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- **FREE** 50MB of web space for your website
- **FREE** Controls to protect children's access
- **FREE** 24hr online customer support
- **FREE** Multimedia CD-ROM worth up to £29.99
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0800 111 210

or visit

www.lineone.net

LINEONE

DEFINE YOUR OWN UNIVERSE

Local call rates apply.

The Village People auditions were a close run thing

Say cheese: it's the official site

The young one

The Bachelor Boy turns 60. Expect a wild party...

The Official Cliff Richard Website

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

www.cliffrichard.org ★★★★

Sir Clifford of Richard's site is not dissimilar to the artiste himself: smooth, polished, and professional. He greets fans with a personal note on the home page, chatting about how his year's sabbatical is going. Apparently he's spent a lot of time in LA where he duetted with Olivia Newton-John, which 'brought back all the old magic'. Other delights on the site include a personal greetings section, plus a shopping zone – buy one video and get another free! Calm down, one at a time...

Sir Cliff Richard

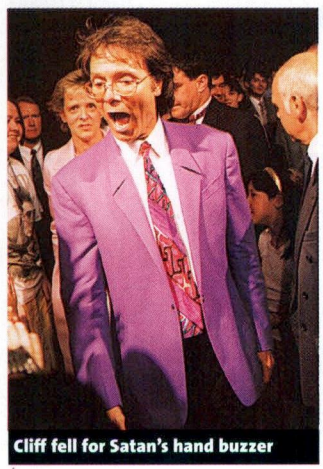
www.angelfire.com/mt/tris19/cliff.html ★★

This enthusiastic fan site is brief, but what it lacks in length is *more* than compensated for in non-objective opinion: Cliff has 'remained a person' (as opposed to what?); and 'he is, of course, extremely good-looking in a dark, boyish way...'. OK, *enough*.

Cliff Richard/The Shadows Items for Sale

www.parallels.demon.co.uk/cliff.html ★★★

Straightforward site for those who want to purchase any items linked – however tenuously – with Cliff.

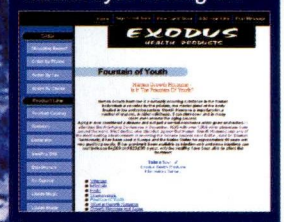


Cliff fell for Satan's hand buzzer

STAY YOUNG

Youth in a pill

So what is the Peter Pan of pop's secret? He's quite obviously discovered the fountain of youth – and now you can, too! According to *www.exodushealthproducts.com/fountain_of_youth.htm*, 'Aging is now considered to be a disease and not a normal occurrence', so purchase the cure: Human Growth Hormone. Previously only available by injection costing up to $20,000 per shot, tablets can now be yours for only $79.95. What are you waiting for?



Items include a brooch with Cliff's name spelt out in diamanté for £5.50. Retail heaven!

King Cliff, the Bachelor Boy

www.mg.co.za/mg/art/music/9912/991202-cliff.html ★★★★

Entertaining piece that promises the real story on the 'Bible-bashing sexless bore'. It may not be the annihilation that that description suggests, but contains interesting facts, such as: Cliff has admitted to having had sex twice and 'has been drunk three times (these may or may not include the occasions when he had sex)'.

Cliff Richard and the Shadows

home.wanadoo.nl/rock_and_roll/cliff.htm ★★★

This site charts Cliff's life on a year-by-year basis. For instance: '1965: Cliff says he likes The Beatles but is not keen on the Stones'; '1970: Cliff condemns permissive society and is praised by Mary Whitehouse'.

BEST CELEBRITIES SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

FIND GOOD GOSSIP?

www.mrshowbiz.com The fastest track to loads of gossip.

www.celebritypalace.com Plenty of gossip, plus links and resources.

FIND A STAR'S ADDRESS?

www.thezone.pair.com/email After emailing, you can pop by for a visit – this site also provides addresses.

www.celebrityemail.com Over 14,000 celebs on its pages, from supermodels to princes.

READ MAGAZINES?

www.eonline.com The latest happenings in the worlds of music, TV, film and video.

www.people.com Online version of the American *People* magazine.

FIND CELEBRITY HOME PAGES?

www.celebsites.com Links to official sites of celebrities from all walks of fame.

www.usfanclubs.com Masses of links to official sites and fan clubs for all kinds of celebs.

www.usfanclubs.com: start stalking!

MEET MY HERO?

www.yack.com Updated list of celebrity events.

www.iknewthemwhen.com Meet the stars before they were famous.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

uk.religion.christian Agree with Sir Cliff's moral agenda? Then why not chat with other bible-bashers?

JOIN A MAILING LIST?

Test your 'golden oldies' knowledge; send an email marked 'info golq' to ***majordomo@world.std.com***.

GET CHATTING?

www.launch.com/Chat/fs_Start. Discuss music with other fans.

WORDS: CLAIRE MCHATTIE; PICTURES: REX FEATURES

SPORTING ICONS

'I am the greatest!'

Inspire pub debate and bar-room brawls with these sites devoted to the biggest names in sports history

Ayrton Senna

www.ayrton-senna.com ★★★★

'Why did Ayrton Senna die? What really happened at Imola 94?' asks the site. Then a Bible quote urges you to 'pursue truth relentlessly', but it might be a little too relentless for some: there are tasty pictures of Senna's body, the ambulance, blood on the tarmac and the funeral – all in sequence as you scroll down the page. Yuck!

'Game, Set and Match, Martina!'

navratilova.tripod.com ★★★★★

That's Martina Navratilova – or Navrátilová, if you wish to respect the accents of her native Prague. The woman who won 167 singles tournaments, almost as many doubles championships and more than 50 Grand Slam titles gets a suitably impressive site, which not only lists every title she ever bagged – enough of a job in itself – but also informs you of her favourite musicians (they include kd lang).

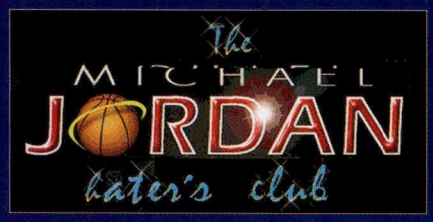
The Carl Lewis Myth and Legend

www.angelfire.com/celeb/carllewis/frame.htm ★★

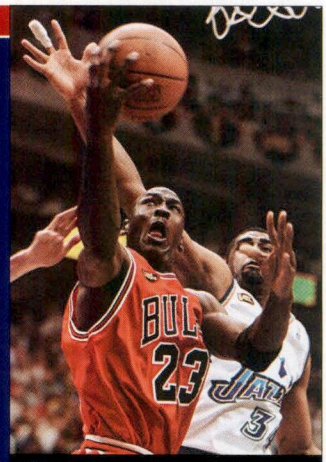
Warning: we advise you to turn the volume down low (or shut it off completely) when you log on to this site, as the cheesy music is all-encompassing and relentless. You are made to feel at home, though: 'Welcome to my pages, visitor. Whenever you want to ask something more or point out some corrections, email me (yes please!). I'll be glad to answer,' announces the Webmaster. He should probably take a leaf out of Lewis's book, though, and get out in the open air a bit.

RAGING BULL

Jordan jive



Nobody pretends that being a sporting icon is easy. You put years of dedicated practice in to get to the top of your game, elevating your sport to new levels and bringing in extensive media coverage – and what happens? Fans of the other side hate you. Michael Jordan might be the best basketball player ever and the highest-salaried sportsman in the world, but it doesn't mean that everyone loves him; as his Chicago Bulls team have trampled all-comers, fans have mobilised into opposition with sites like the Michael Jordan Haters' Club (*members.aol.com/Jerky987/Jordan.html*). Money can't soothe the pain when you're accused of being a 'cry-baby' who 'sucks at basketball', but at least Mike has one other thing in his favour – he isn't David Beckham.



Sticky-back plastic was Michael's key

Wayne Gretzky

members.tripod.com/~sarsenau/gretzky ★★★

Wayne: bad name, great ice hockey hero with a camp picture to welcome you to his site – you can't ask for more. It's incredibly detailed and should satisfy the most ardent fan with its multitude of stats, pics and items for sale (like Wayne's life in pictures for $20.96). It seems that 59 percent of visitors to the site think he shouldn't have retired. But even heroes get old.

The Greatest – Muhammad Ali

www.zyworld.com/thegreatest ★★★

Like the man himself: attractive, stylish and full of great quotes – and not just the oft-repeated 'float like a butterfly, sting like a bee,' but also classics like 'It's just a job. Grass grows, birds fly, waves pound the sand. I just beat people up.' Don't bother going to the links, however, as they tell you more about the Webmaster than they do about the former Cassius Clay.

Don Bradman

www.cricket.org/link_to_database/PLAYERS/AUS/B/BRADMAN_DG_02000492/ARTICLES/BRADMAN_PAGES/ ★★★

'The Don' was a cricketing great. Unfortunately, this site doesn't quite reflect the man himself. Sure, it's dignified, straightforward and competent, but it lacks flair, excitement and quality. There's also a touch of self-reference from the Webmaster ('An eyewitness account of Bradman's astonishing century against Middlesex by my father, John Liverman.') That aside, it's a perfectly respectable site and a useful place to start if you want to learn about the player.

Mark Spitz

www.cmgww.com/sports/spitz ★★★

Swimmer extraordinaire, Mark Spitz, won not one, not two – but seven gold medals at the 1972 Olympics in Munich, earning him the nickname 'Mark the Shark'. He also sported the finest moustache this side of Burt Reynolds. Sadly, the photo on which he smoulders on his official page bear witness to the use of a razor. ▶

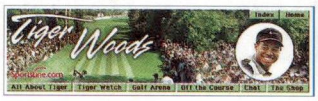
PICK OF THE NET

Tiger Woods

www.tigerwoods.com ★★★★★

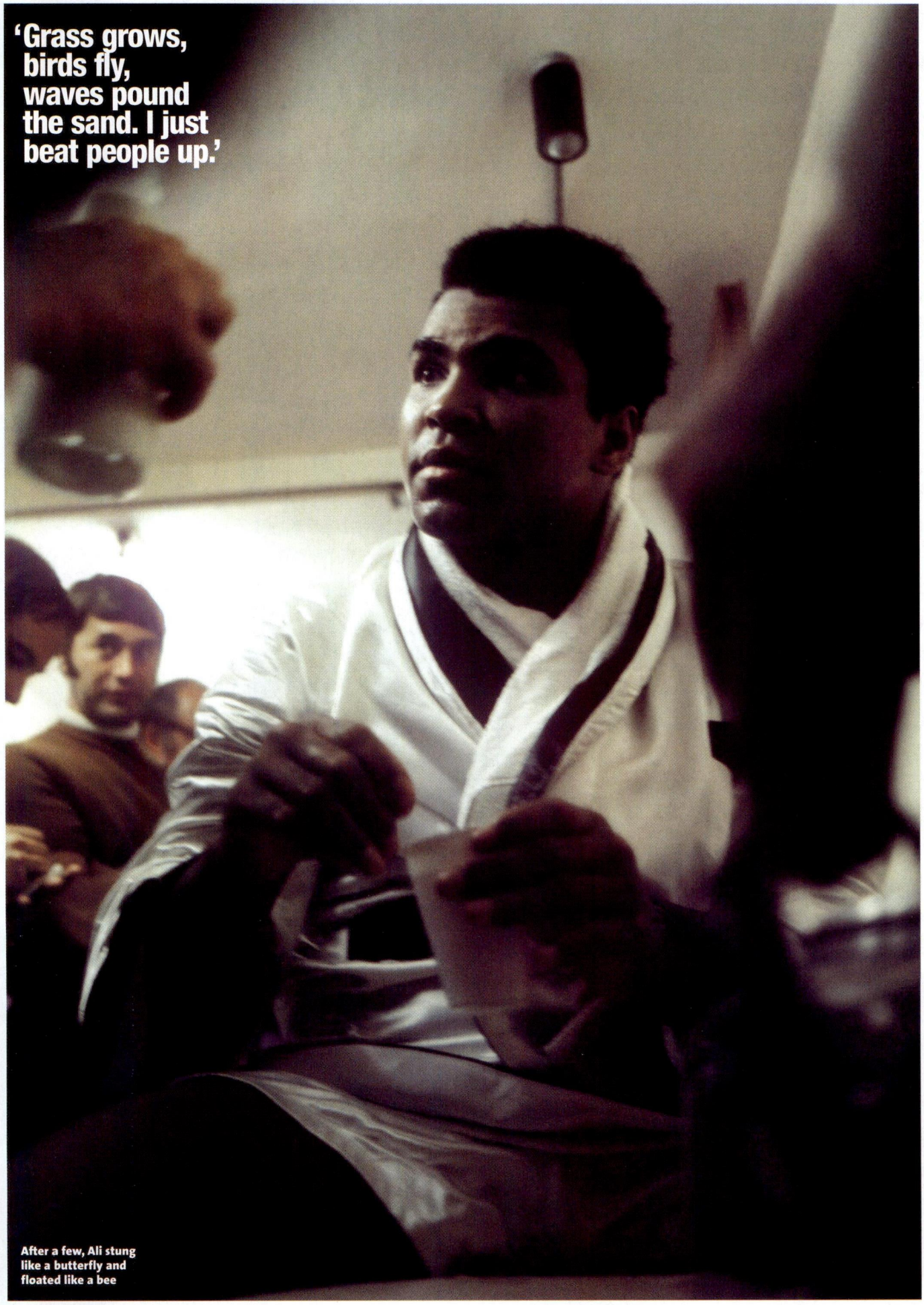
thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

There is a sickening professionalism about Tiger Woods. He's slick, he's talented and, when it comes to Web sites, this CBS-sponsored site is worthy of such a complete champion. There are a number of athletes/icons – or rather their fans – out there who haven't quite got their acts together when it comes to addressing basic multimedia

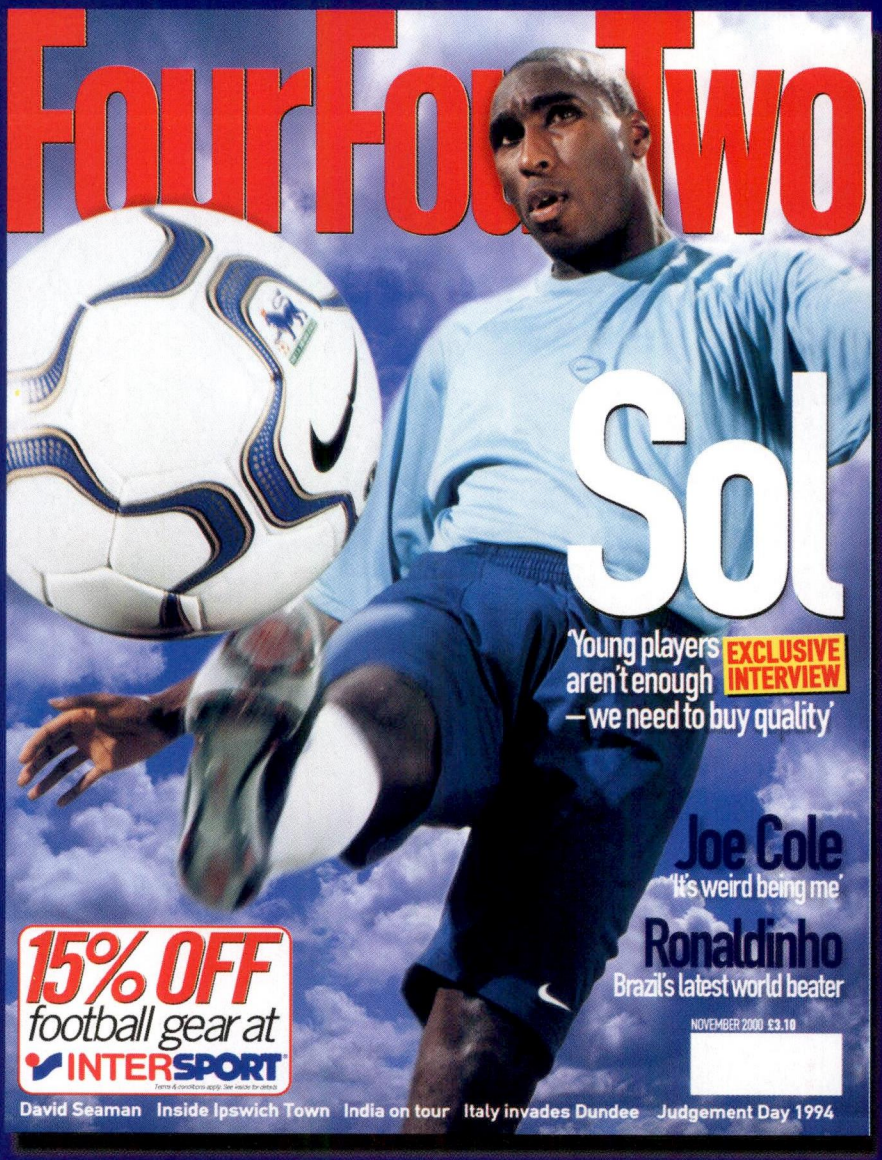


tasks, but not the Woods machine. Oh no, he's way ahead of the game both on and off the green. You can shop, chat, join his fan club, email the master, follow his tournaments – heck, you can practically carry his clubs (almost).

WORDS: NOAM FRIEDLANDER; PICTURES: EMPICS, PA



After a few, Ali stung like a butterfly and floated like a bee



On sale Wed 4 October

BEST SPORT SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

FIND THE LATEST NEWS AND SCORES?

espn.go.com Scores for all sports, with a Yankee tint.
www.sportlive.net *Express*-backed site with news and info.
www.soccernet.com Scoreflashes from all UK games.
www.sporting-life.com News, scores and betting advice.

FIND TOP FOOTBALL SITES?

www.football365.com Humour, news and plenty of features.
www.fourfourtwo.com New site from Britain's best football mag.
www.teamtalk.com Club news.
www.soccer-links.com Well-organised links for world sites.

PLACE AN ONLINE BET?

www.bluesq.com Best-known and easiest-to-use online bookie.
www.victorchandler.com User-friendly site from the traditional bookie.
www.sportingindex.com The biggest spread-betting site on the Net.
www.vipsports.com Great gambling site covering a variety of sports.

FOLLOW EVENTS LIVE?

www.planetfootball.com Hub site for English football clubs' audio broadcasts.
www.sportlist.com Guide to every sports show on British TV.
www.talksport.net Listen to the radio station's sports coverage live.
www.broadcast.com/sports/soccer A variety of teams in RealAudio.

Top mag, now online: FourFourTwo

FIND THE BEST SITES FOR POPULAR SPORTS?

www.planet-rugby.com Where the oval ball rules.
www.atlasf1.com News, articles and chat from the online motoring mag.
www.boxingonline.com Online king of the ring.
www.athlecticsweekly.com New site, with news, profiles and results.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

alt.gambling Got any hot tips on your favourite sports star? Then why not share it here...

GET CHATTING?

www.q-lane.com/sportschat A variety of boards for popular sports.

After a sweaty game, Pelé's whiff was enough to make him airborne

It's the 'Mark Spitz unofficial site' (***users.iol.it/visone/ indexe.html***), however, that really catches the eye; what this has to do with the swimmer is questionable.

Pelé, Olé!

www.isfa.com/server/web/pele ★★★★

Despite having to click on the American flag to get the English language page, this site has plenty of information for the Pelé fan. The Webmaster also takes great pains (on every page) to point out: 'I am not Pelé. This is an unofficial Pelé site.' Sadly there is no section devoted to Pelé's acting debut in *Escape to Victory*.

Jesse Owens

chotank.com/jessecont.html ★★★

Jesse Owens overcame segregation, racism and bigotry to compete in the 1936 Olympics, and ruined Hitler's Aryan-ideal theories by scooping four gold medals. A deserved subject for a Web site then, but – extensive biography aside – his official site (***www.cmgww.com/sports/owens***) is dull. Check this one out instead for more links (to the Owens Museum, etc) and a fairly decent gallery.

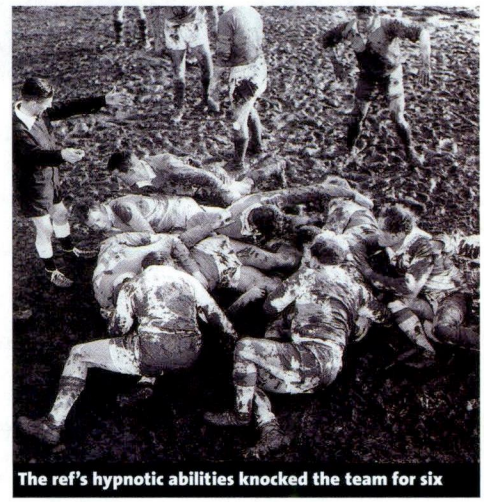
Big in the tackle

Super League climaxes this month, so scrum on down to *the net*'s pick of top Rugby League sites

Play the Ball

www.playtheball. com ★★★★

The sister site to Rugby Union's Scrum.com site. Get the latest news and, if you ever wondered about the difference between the codes, why not visit the history section? Best of all, there's a competition to win free beer just by recommending your favourite post-/pre-match boozer – bringing a whole new meaning to the phrase 'a thirst for knowledge'.


The ref's hypnotic abilities knocked the team for six

Rugby Leaguer Online

www.rugbyleaguer.co.uk ★★★

The online version of one of the best Rugby League magazines out there is as straightforward as Adrian Morley on a crash ball and – like the Leeds forward – is just as effective at what it does best. Biggest lure is Ray 'The Voice of RL' French as a columnist, plus Super League news, rumours and reports. The site was undergoing a revamp at the time of writing, promising 'more BALLS!'.

Leeds Rhinos Online

www.leedsrugby.com/rhinos/ frames.htm ★★★★

A club site as well-rounded as star stand-off Lestyn Harris. Galleries for both the players and the cheerleaders, if you like that sort of thing; wallpaper for the die-hards; a trivia quiz; and an email news service. Most importantly there's a guide to the Grand Final Play-Offs, the workings of which have flummoxed many a Rugby League fan. There's even a travel guide for Rhinos fans going big-game hunting...

Fantasy Rugby League 2000

www.fantasyrugby.fsnet.co.uk ★★★

You're given a budget of £4million to pick a fantasy team from the Super League rosters. Worth visiting the site for 'Heard what Stevo said?' – a compilation of punditry gems including, 'It's coconut shy time. I'm off to the fair' following a brutal high tackle. There's also a selection of poems about the game – who would have thought it?

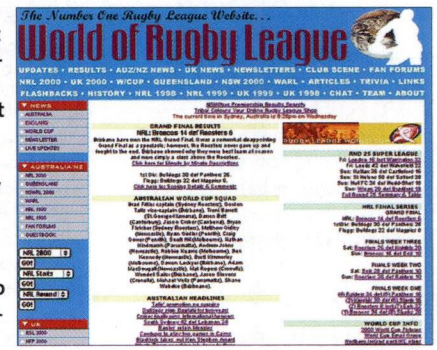
PICK OF THE NET

World of Rugby League

www.rleague.com ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

Tough though it is to admit, Australia leads the way on the pitch in Super League; and this Aussie-hosted site does the same online. But don't despair, the European coverage here is every bit as comprehensive as that given to the southern hemisphere. The site forgoes clutter and pictures in favour of fast downloading, easy navigation and a smorgasbord of information that includes a searchable archive. There's also a chat section if you fancy some 'verbal' sparring. As well as covering the Super League in its two incarnations, there's also a section for the upcoming World Cup.



For more great sporting sites, turn to Need To Know on page 107

WORDS: BRUCE POPE; PICTURES: KOBAL COLLECTION

'And you join us as...'

'Read all about it!' Track down that breaking story

CNN.com

www.cnn.com ★★★★★

Even Ted Turner couldn't have predicted the results when he somewhat grudgingly opened a 24-hour news service as a lever to get other channels aired: CNN grew into an international first-stop for breaking news, especially after the Gulf War. The Atlanta-based operation is inevitably US-centric but the site is stuffed with videos, Flash illustrations and links aplenty – helped by the linkup with *Time* magazine.

ITN

www.itn.co.uk ★★★★

ITN online faces a problem in that it doesn't have the talismanic Trevor McDonald fronting it. Still, Daljit Dhaliwal is in evidence on an easily readable site which presents the news attractively and covers lots of bases (for instance, specialised portals MissDorothy.com and Uprush provide kids' and twentysomethings' news). ITN has a news ticker and an email news service, but impressively the Desktop system includes pictures and video.

Ananova

www.ananova.com ★★★★

Long admired in journo circles for providing news stories for all, the Press Association's Web presence was largely ignored until the launch of Ananova, a 'virtual' presenter looking suspiciously like Victoria Beckham. Even though most people read the words rather than watch the video, the gimmick worked, launching PA to deserved prominence as a news-gatherer par excellence.

Reuters

www.reuters.com/newslogic.jhtml ★★★

Each second, Reuters updates 6,000 prices and items of data. There's no messing with the site's credentials as a leading financial information portal and, like PA, Reuters is renowned within journalism. What's almost as obvious is that Reuters isn't the place to go unless you like your news hard. Technology, science and business are to the fore, and human interest is left to others.

itn.co.uk: wot, no Trev?

Ananova is a virtual presenter who looks suspiciously like Mrs Beckham

NewsNow

www.newsnow.co.uk ★★★

If you can't get the information yourself, you can distill the efforts of those who can. That's the ethos behind digests such as NewsNow, which brings you dozens of headlines from several sources and updates them every five minutes. The links at the bottom of the homepage impress and the flag for the country of origin helps, but the story choice often isn't great – does the world really need a Crewe vs Bury football preview?

Sky News

www.sky.com/news ★★★★

Helpfully subtitled 'Witness the event' in case you forget why you're there. Not the prettiest front page, plugging too many products and Sky channels, but it does offer a decent range and depth of stories. 'Pop-up Papers' does as you'd expect, displaying each national's front page with a short précis, while there are loads of Web cams if you wish you weren't here.

Yahoo! News

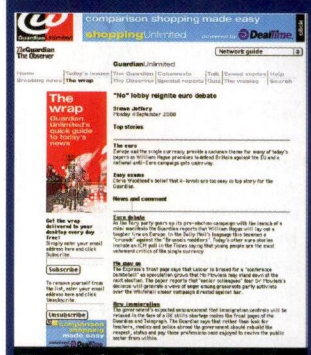
uk.news.yahoo.com ★★★★

Jerry Yang might not like his Web directory being described as the centre of cyberspace, but it's probably the homepage most people choose because it does a reasonable job of collating and ordering the Internet (an impossible task). The news section is similarly tidy, gathering the news from various sources. Weather, WAP services, polls and customisability round up a strong service.

DESKTOP BULLETINS

Digital newshounds

You can drop in on any of these sites when you like and the latest news will be displayed, but news junkies tend to need a regular fix. Guardian Unlimited will email you a round-up of the newspapers each morning (***www.guardianunlimited.co.uk/thewrap***), Ananova lets you choose what you want to be emailed about from a list of hundreds of topics, while ITN's personalised Desktop News flasher even utilises audio and video – if your email server allows. If that's not enough, you can scan your news ticker (available from BBC and ITN) – a desktop application which will bleep away all day telling you the latest.



News that's unlimited, apparently

BEST NEWS SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

RECEIVE NEWS?

www.thisislondon.co.uk Capital-based news from the *Evening Standard*.

pa.press.net Vast array of news-related services, including a desktop ticker and diary.

FIND LOCAL NEWS?

www.thisis.co.uk Just add the name of your preferred city or county (eg ***www.thisisessex.co.uk***) to get news, chat and events near you.

www.ecola.com/news/press/eu/uk Directory of online UK regional newspapers and magazines.

COMPILE MY OWN NEWS PAGES?

www.crayon.net Aka 'Create Your Own Newspaper'. Build a daily digest of headlines.

my.yahoo.com Personalise a Yahoo! page to get the news you want.

GET A DIFFERENT SPIN?

www.drudgereport.com Notorious American columnist who broke the Clinton scandal – and quite a lot more besides.

www.thesmokinggun.com A variety of material from US government and law enforcement sources. Quirky.

www.theonion.com Justifiably calling themselves 'America's finest news source', this satirical mag features such gems as 'Dolphins Evolve Opposable Thumbs: "Oh Shit," says Humanity'.

The Onion: stinkin' excellent

FIND WEATHER & TRAVEL?

www.wunderground.com It lists current conditions and a forecast for any location, anywhere, in colour.

www.theaa.co.uk/motoring/ukroads/traffic.asp Warns you of roadworks, road closures and delays all over the country.

www.londontransport.co.uk/tube/ We all know how unreliable the tube can be, so be sure to check out London Transport's homepage for the latest information.

JOIN A NEWSGROUP?

uk.media All the latest headlines are just a keystroke away. Just think, no more messy newsprint...

FIND A MAILING LIST?

Try www.itn.co.uk/desktopnews Try webpage/preferences.htm for some daily news.

GET CHATTING?

www.news.bbc.co.uk Head for the 'Talking Point'...

WORDS: GARY PARKINSON; PICTURES: BBC

Adie made a rule never to get too close to her crew

ABC News

www.abcnews.go.com ★★★★

ABC might not be the biggest hitter of the American TV networks, but its news site features the clearest layout and most impressive depth of features. It's a bit eye-boggling to start with, but that's US TV for ya. The clear symbols help you navigate the extensive features – including more than a few Webcasts.

FOXnews.com

www.foxnews.com ★★★★

Rupert Murdoch is still to be convinced about the merits of the Internet, but the news site of his US TV interest attempts to fully embrace the medium. It's well laid out – a table of contents on each article directs you to the bit you need – but the annoying 'Fox Facts', for those with a short attention span, quickly grate.

PICK OF THE NET

BBC News

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

news.bbc.co.uk ★★★★★

The Big Daddy Rabbit of the news world. Utilising the hundreds of 'stringers' (freelances around the globe filing stories when they happen) built up by one of the world's most formidable news organisations, BBC News is on the spot when it happens. The site is still the first port of call for many when news breaks. It utilises multimedia well, with audio reports and video footage bolstering the text. In Depth and Talking Point expand upon the latest in a *Newsnight*-esque style, while headlines are also available in Arabic, Spanish, Russian, Chinese and Welsh.

Has Sir Alex got enough titles?

BLUE SQ

Place all your football bets at bluesq.com

Rules apply – See www.bluesq.com Over 18's only

I want to get away, fly away

Can't wait till the Christmas season for a break? Then why not pop away for a weekend quickie?

New York City Hotels 4 Less

www.new-york-cityhotels4less.co.uk/index.html

★★★★

If you're in need of some intensive retail therapy, then head to New York for a three-day break. But, before you grab a suitcase (or swag-bag), head to this site for some very reasonable Noo Yawk deals. Peruse the list of recommended hotels or get an all-inclusive flight-and-hotel city break; the company can also arrange a sightseeing itinerary.

Bridge Travel

www.bridgetravel.co.uk ★★★★

Snoop around Johnny Foreigner's backyard with this European city break specialist, which offers a wide selection of destinations. The company is actually a group of specialist companies, 'each dedicated to a shortbreak destination' – so you can be sure they won't try to palm you off with Paris when you wanted Prague. Handy pop-up menus accompany each city for immediate reference, and you can decide between hotel-only versus flight-and-hotel deals – all with discounts for online booking. Phew!

Bill Wright's Capital Breaks

www.londonbreaks.com/index.html

★★★★

If London is more your thing, take a look at Bill Wright's Capital Breaks. Aimed at the more exclusive end of weekend breaks ('Everything is booked to the highest standard'), a 'Typical Break' involves a four-star hotel and 'only the finest seats' at a West End show. One question, though: how much of an authority on London can they be if they're based in West Yorkshire?

Webreaks ★★★★

www.webreaks.co.uk

If you fancy a weekend break but aren't keen on going abroad, have a look here for breaks in the good ol' UK. It doesn't arrange trips, but instead lists accommodation according to where you want to go. You can also search according to which town or airport you are near. Easy to use and comprehensive, so get the A-Z road atlas ready...

AS SEEN ON TV

All change...

Fancy a bit of a change? Log onto *www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~trojan/weekends.htm* and you can join other men to experience life as a 'femme' in Manchester's gay village. The weekend includes transportation, accommodation and clothing ('bras, panties and stockings...'). The booking form asks for a list of clothes you would prefer to wear – with one skirt length being 'Yes Officer?'. Well, girls, if you've got it...

BEST TRAVEL SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

FIND THE BEST HOLIDAY AND FLIGHT DEALS?

www.azbtravel.co.uk Britain's biggest online travel agent.
www.myownprice.com This site tries to match the price you want to pay.
www.deckchair.com Comprehensive flight-finders.

GET DESTINATION INFO?

www.t-e.co.uk A great resource for travelogues, advice and guides.
www.roughguides.com From the publishers of the guides.
www.lonelyplanet.com Let the travel experts guide you.

GET DOS AND DON'TS?

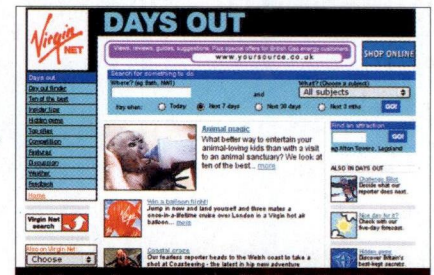
www.tips4trips.com 1,000 handy 'tips for trips'.
www.fco.gov.uk/travel Get info on countries before setting off.
www.travel-news.org Good source of independent news for travellers.

FIND ACCOMMODATION?

www.placestostay.com This will find you a suitable place to rest up.
www.cottage-net.ndirect.co.uk Self-catering database.
www.smoothhound.co.uk A guide to B&Bs and hotels across the UK.

SPEND A DAY OUT IN BRITAIN?

www.LondonTown .com/indexz.html Things to do in the Big Smoke.



Let the day be your oyster with Virgin Net's help

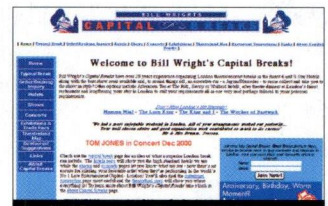
www.virgin.net/daysout Tips galore.
www.britainexpress.com A jam-packed travel and heritage guide.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

alt.travel Pick up travel tips here.

GET CHATTING?

If your weekend break didn't live up to expectations, why not vent your spleen at ***HolidayComplaint.com***. You'll feel better for it and may prevent someone from making the same mistake!



Capital Breaks: all very high-brow

PICK OF THE NET

Webweekends

www.webweekends.co.uk ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

Be spoilt for choice at this comprehensive site. Offering breaks around the world (their opinion is that a weekend comprises four days, so the selection includes the shopaholic's duty-free paradise Dubai), the humble getaway isn't the straightforward trip it once was. There are activities to choose from – fancy a festival? Shopping? A spa? – then you have to plump for a city or country. Making a selection is easy at this well- designed site, with helpful tips and features on the destination of the month. There are even competitions to enter and a selection of articles to get you in the travelling mood. Have your passport ready!

***webweekends.co.uk*: comprehensive**

Gnnnmpffh: Will you please look where your going

WORDS: CLAIRE MCHATTIE; PICTURE: NEWSMAKERS

Nice set of wheels

Mark this month's Motor Show by ogling the best cars in the world – look at the bodywork on that!

Ferrari
www.ferrari.it ★★★★★

Ask anyone to name a supercar, and sure as Ferraris are red they'll name the world-renowned marque of the prancing horse. The tradition, glamour and style that signify this Italian thoroughbred of thoroughbreds are all reflected in the gorgeous official site; check how the company began and how it got its famous logo, then do what you came to do – get the pictures and statistics of every Ferrari model ever produced. Stunning.

Porsche
www.porsche.com ★★★★

There's no sound on earth like the glorious deep-throated growl of a supercar's engine, so praise is due to Porsche for providing a sound section that allows you to download the rev-heavy roar of a number of models. Don't be fooled by the site's somewhat sensible appearance: there's an awful lot going on in here – info, stats, motorsports, events near you and even a chat room and games.

Mercedes
www.mercedes-benz.co.uk ★★★

Just what you'd expect from the German über-manufacturer: precision, minimalism and more silver than Mika Hakkinen's trophy cabinet. It's beautifully designed (of course), with enough stats to cause your friends' eyes to glaze over down the pub, plus there's details on finding a used model if that's what you're after. And for those whose interest lies on the track, there's loads of news on the marque's involvement in F1 with the McLaren racing team.

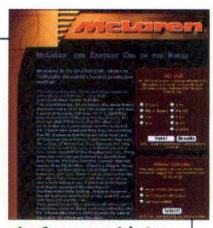
Aston Martin – where you have the chance to pretend you're James Bond

TVR
www.tvr-eng.co.uk ★★★

As British as the Union Jack, TVRs have an understated elegance even though they represent some of the world's fastest cars. If you're after one, check out the list of dealers or

PICK OF THE NET

McLaren F1

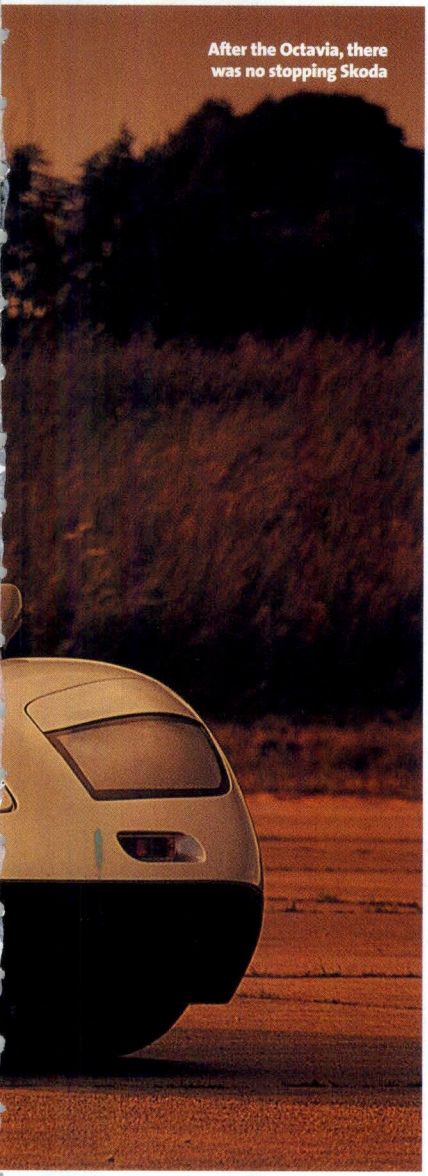


thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

www.klte.hu/~akosk/mclaren/ ★★★★★

Even though it needs slightly longer to download than the car itself takes to reach 60mph (a teeth-rattling 2.9 seconds), this site is worth the wait. Paying homage to the fastest production car in the world (with a top speed of 240mph), it does the job admirably. Which is just as well as you're never likely to get your mits on the real thing. Only 100 were ever made...

WORDS: SARAH WAKELEY; PICTURES: AUTOCAR



CHEAPER OPTION

Rental case

So you fancy yourself in the seat of a supercar but can't afford the readies (or the insurance, for that matter)? Then hire a flash motor for the weekend and watch that pulling power rise instantly. Companies such as Blue Chip Cars (www.bluechipcars.co.uk) will be more than happy to provide you with a set of wheels – when we visited, a week in the company of a Ferrari F1 was £3150. Or there's always an Aston Martin DB7, a Bentley Azure, or, for the ultimate in swank travel, a Lamborghini Diablo. Just be sure to return it in one piece.

Lamborghini

www.geocities.com/MotorCity/5849/
★★★★

Subtlety and Lamborghini don't mix and this site is suitably brash, with masses of pictures and information in an easy-to-use format, a quiz, a guest book and forum. There's even a price list to drool over – fancy the Diablo Roadster, complete with removable roof? Don't expect much change from £200,000, though.

Lotus Elise

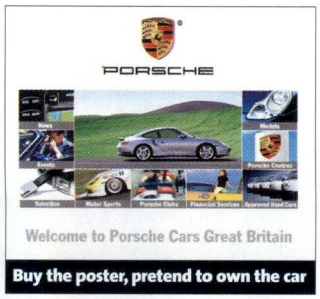
www.btinternet.com/~robert.collingridge/cars/elise ★★★★

The webmaster owns a Lotus Elise, but he managed to pull himself out of the driving seat to create this site. Details of accessories, components, statistics and upgrades are lovingly listed, as is information about models plus loads of links – and check out the multimedia section for a visual feast. For other Lotus models, check the official site at ***www.lotuscars.co.uk***.

Aston Martin Lagonda

www.globalserve.net/~hidinger/aml
★★★★

Aah, Aston Martin: the epitome of style, panache – and a chance to pretend you're James Bond. Go here to drool over everything from the classic DB5 through to the latest prototypes. And if you fancy careering round a track at phenomenal speed, there's lots on racing models as well. Alternatively, stay shaken not stirred (sorry) at the official site (***www.astonmartin.com***).



Buy the poster, pretend to own the car

Marcos

www.marcoscars.com ★★★

If you're going to buy a supercar, the least that manufacturers can let you do is buy it in the colour of your choice, even in baby pink. The official Marcos site (manufacturers of the Great British Sports Car for over 40 years, don't you know) lets you select your car and then see it in the colour you want. The useful TVR finder. Then find out all about the models, including the fabulous Cerbera (which, apparently, is Italian for 'a fierce and frightening woman').

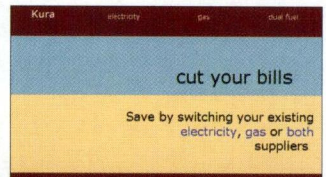
Bill withers

Cut down on dark satanic bills with all-in-one offers

Kura

www.kura.co.uk ★★★

Kura is different from the other sites here in that it acts more like an agency which aims to get you a good deal on your utilities (others like it include ***www.buy.co.uk***). Now we know that cheaper utility sites are all about low overheads but lavishing the odd graphic or piece of flashing text on Kura's minimalist site wouldn't go amiss. And while there's no reason to doubt its ability, in a market where trust is all important, the scantness of info about who Kura is may leave some visitors uncomfortable.



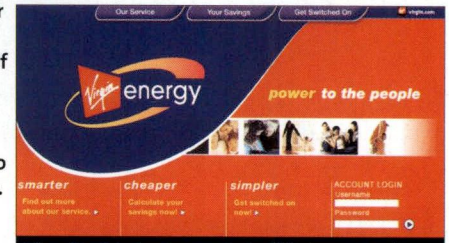
Bill-cutting: bad for birds, good for you

Powergen

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

www.powergen.co.uk

Much funkier than your average utilities site and if you sign up for gas, leccy or phone you can choose from up to £50 cashback or a free night out for two at Jongleurs comedy club. There's also a cashback offer to be had from joining up to Powergen's ISP, Surf and Save. No average savings are stated on the site but there is a calculator for you to use.



Okay, it might be cheaper but will it run on time?

Servista

www.servista.com ★★★★

Having trouble getting your head around just how these companies manage to offer cheaper utility bills? Then this site explains it better than most. Servista claims it can save you £152 a year on gas, electricity and phone bills and it's shortly to add ISDN, ADSL and Internet access.

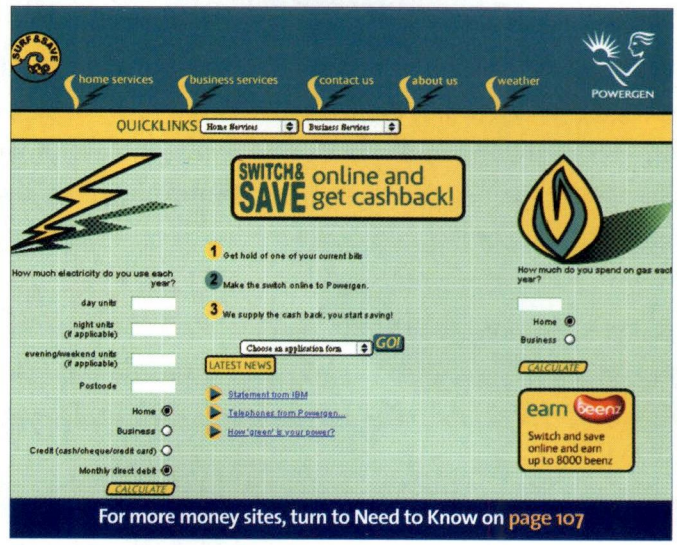
Virgin

www.virgin.com/energy ★★★★

Richard Branson reckons he can save the average four-bedroom house £85 a year and a one-bedroom flat up to £48. Virgin has teamed up with London Electricity for its Net utility venture and has a guarantee that says if, after a year, you would have been better off on your previous deals, you can claim the difference plus 20 per cent of that difference. Nice one Ricky B.

Supplier	Average savings on average annual consumption
Servista	£72 on gas, £20 on electricity
Virgin	£60 on combined gas and electric
Powergen	£15 cashback on each fuel, plus further savings*

*** average savings not stated on site**



For more money sites, turn to Need to Know on page 107

You'll save thousands on the manufacturers' list prices with our special deals. And we'll deliver straight to your door.* Meanwhile we give you an agreed on-line trade-in price for your old car† and collect it from your door.* Virtually any make or model is available and we offer a seven day return policy. It's as simple as that.

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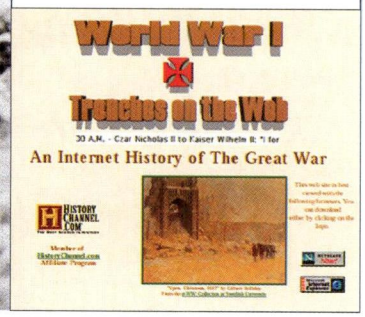
PICK OF THE NET

Trenches on the Web

www.worldwar1.com ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

Explanatory and understanding without ever trivialising or glamourising, Trenches on the Web is a superb resource on the conflict that claimed 10 million lives. Visitors can take 'guided tours' of its packed content or navigate themselves around the biographies, articles, documents, photos, sound files, statistics, timelines and reviews. There's even advice on planning a trip to battle sites if you want to visit yourself. Compulsory reading for those who agree that we should never forget...



We shall remember them...

When the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month arrives, you can honour WW1's heroes on the Net

Britain in the Great War ★★★★

british-forces.com/world_war1

Commemorating home involvement in the conflict of WW1, this site does a sterling job of explaining the key players and powers at work as well as the major events of the war – after all (as the site points out), 'Britain was the lynchpin in the whole allied strategy'. Soldiers, women and even animals who played a part are all paid tribute to, and the links section is great if you want to find out more.

In Flanders Fields ★★★★★

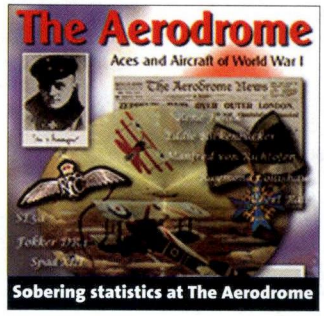
www.inflandersfields.be

The poppy-scattered fields of Flanders will forever remain synonymous with the death and bloodshed of the Great War. This site, the online home of a museum in Ypres, is an international commemoration of WW1. It's currently undergoing a redesign, but is still packed full of information, with a timeline, details of major events and characters from the war, and a study of life both at home and in the trenches – parts of which, unsurprisingly, make harrowing reading. Plus, there's details of the museum itself, in the event you feel compelled to make a visit.

The Aerodrome ★★★★

www.theaerodrome.com

The Great War represented a breakthrough in warfare in that it was the first time aeroplanes had been used in combat. This comprehensive site details all the aircraft that participated in the war by nationality, as well as listing sobering statistics on production and the numbers of planes lost in combat. Also, be sure to visit the section on WW1 'Aces', a tribute to, and biographies of, the many pilots who made an outstanding contribution to the war effort. Further reading about the war can be found through the extensive links page.

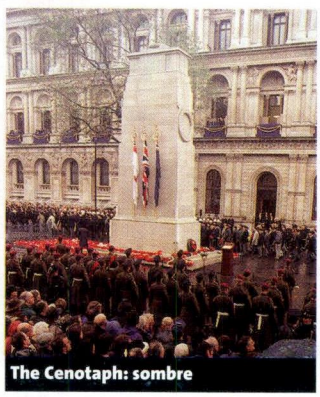


Sobering statistics at The Aerodrome

Photos of the Great War ★★★★

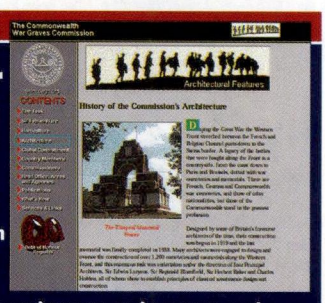
www.ukans.edu/~kansite/ww_one/photos/greatwar.htm

It's easy to forget that when WW1 took place, it was considered the war to end all wars – only for the second to happen 21 years later. The exhaustive set of images on this site, representing 'an eternal testament to those whose lives were lost or altered', pays tribute to all who took part in the Great War. Many are grainy, most are disturbing, but all should be seen as a record of life at the time. We guarantee you'll be moved.


The Cenotaph: sombre

FINDING THE FALLEN

They do not grow old...



Thanks to the Internet, tasks that might have taken months can now be done in seconds. Tracking down relatives who died during wartime is one – try the superb Commonwealth Graves Commission site, at *www.cwgc.org*, as a start. Simply enter the details you know and a list of matching names, both servicemen and women and civilians, will be returned along with their burial place (if known) and/or any memorials on which they're mentioned.

WORDS: SARAH WAKELY; PICTURES: PA

Steve's latest creation left him more free time to enjoy the new Maplin Catalogue...

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E & OE. All trademarks acknowledged. All prices inc. VAT. All prices correct at time of going to press. All prices are subject to change without notice. All offers are subject to availibility.

Down in one, down in one...

Who said alcohol and 'sport' don't mix? Make the most of your boozing with online drinking games...

Drinking Games Archive

www.slashpalace.org/~drink/drinking

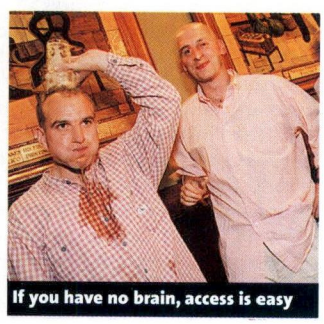
★★★★

Americans, unlike the Brits, typically need an excuse to drink – which is why the US is a spiritual home to drinking games. This site is a good place to start as it's equipped with some powerful tools, meaning you can search its 289-game archive by name, type ('co-ordination'; 'endurance') and propensity to induce drunkenness (from 'low' to 'deadly'). Some droll editor's notes complete the package. Cheers!

The Ultimate Drinking Game Homepage

www.geocities.com/TelevisionCity/Set/7200/drinking.htm ★★★

Most drinking games are TV- or film-related: get your mates together, lay on some booze, choose a character, then chug one back every time they trot out one of a series of pre-defined clichés. There are an astonishing 663 such games on this site, although it's let down by some dead links and the lack of a rating system. *South Park* has the most games based on it, but look out for versions based on *Two Fat Ladies* and *Antiques Roadshow*.



If you have no brain, access is easy

Drinking Games at Bar-None

www.barnonedrinks.com ★★★

An easily-navigated site in praise of the demon alcohol, which is a good source of quirky drinking games. Our favourite is based on the film version of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*: 'Buy tape. Choose a character. Drink whenever your character does.' Then there's the mighty Beer Hunter: shake up a can of beer, mix it in with identical, unshaken cans, place a random can against your head, open it. Hours of fun.

Real Beer Page: Games

www.realbeer.com/fun/games ★★

This worthy San Francisco-based site is paradise for ale nerds ('When sitting down and enjoying a real beer, you're more likely to find yourself in conversation than in games...'). That said, they're not above a bit of fun, and there are some classics hidden among the dice, card and TV-related shenanigans. The Beerathlon, for example, involves drinking teams throwing tables as far as they can...

Beer Trek

planetofthegeeks.com/trek/beertrek

★★★

The crew of the Starship Enterprise might have knocked back the ▶

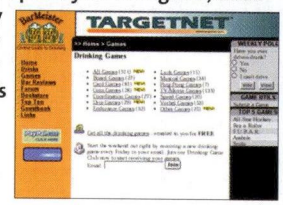
PICK OF THE NET

BarMeister.com

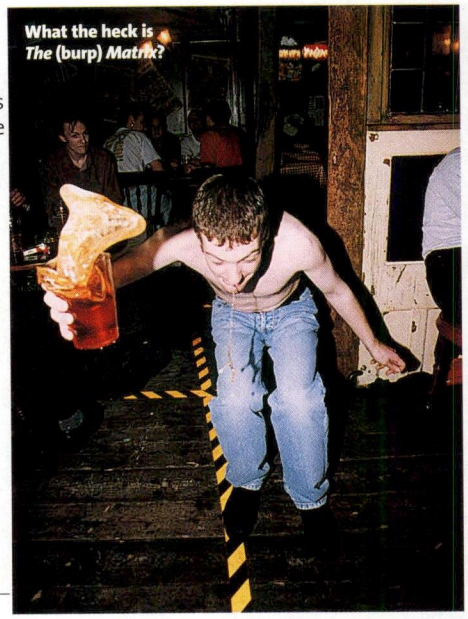
www.barmeister.com/games.html ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

The Moe's Tavern of drinking games sites; you'll find 500+ of the things here, sorted by theme, voted for by users and given a 'Buzz' rating. You can upload your own game, email others to friends, comment on gameplay and join the mailing list to receive a new set of rules every Friday – just in time for the weekend. Highlights include Britney's Beers, to be played while watching the video to *Baby One More Time*, plus timeless pub favourites such as Burn the Napkin ('Buzz: High').



DRINKING GAMES



occasional Saurian brandy, but their fans take their ale more seriously. There are rules for every offshoot of the *Star Trek* universe, plus shots of the creators knocking back a few in their home-made uniforms. Excuses for imbibing include 'Homosexual undertones in dialogue or situations...'. Now that should spark off a few conversations.

Voyage to the Bottom of the Glass

www.portup.com/~hjbe/voyage/drink.html ★★★

Ironically, one of the worst TV shows ever to air (100 episodes!) has inspired a fine Web site – part of which is this drinking game. So slap in a video, open a bottle of Jack, join Captain Nelson and his submariners and start drinking both on clichés and contra-clichés, such as 'Character who visits Seaview is still alive at the end'.

Chug one back every time a TV character trots out a pre-defined cliché

The Drinking Game Drinking Game

www.angelfire.com/ri/lancez/drinking. html ★★

Read through enough drinking game rules and you begin to notice they're full of clichés: 'Take two drinks when...'; 'Head to the liquor store if...'. So clichéd, in fact, that they'd make ideal material for a drinking game themselves – like this one, whose own set of rules would require you to take 12 drinks.

BEST GAMES SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

PLAY GAMES ONLINE?

www.shockwave.com
Shocked games and cartoons.
www.gameplay.com
Britain's biggest online gaming site.

BUY GAMES?

www.gamesst reet.infront.co.uk
Excellent deals on a range of games.
www.game-retail.co.uk
The shop of the High Street store.

FIND DEMOS?

www.happypuppy.com
New demos and shareware games.
www.gameaddict.net
Demos and reviews for PC games.

FIND GAMING NEWS?

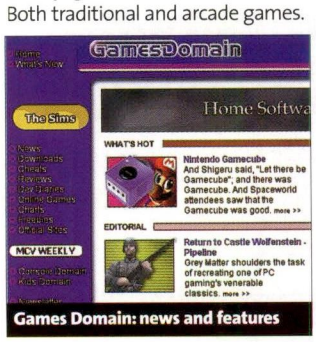
www.gamesdomain.co.uk
News and game-related features.
www.gamedaily.com
Get the latest news on this site.

FIND HINTS AND CHEATS?

www.cheatfinder.co.uk
No-fuss UK-based cheat portal for the gleefully dishonest.
www.xcheater.com
A large back catalogue of cheats.

PLAY TRADITIONAL GAMES?

games.yahoo.com
Card games, board games and much more.
www.pogo.com
Both traditional and arcade games.



Games Domain: news and features

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

alt.alcohol Swap your favourite drinking games with other lushes.

GET CHATTING?

homepage.tinet.ie/~blair/chat.htm
Why not shoot the breeze over a couple of virtual drinks at a genuine virtual pub?

KIDS ENTERTAINERS

Here we are now – entertain us!

Dazzle the little perishers with magic and silliness

The Magician's Corner

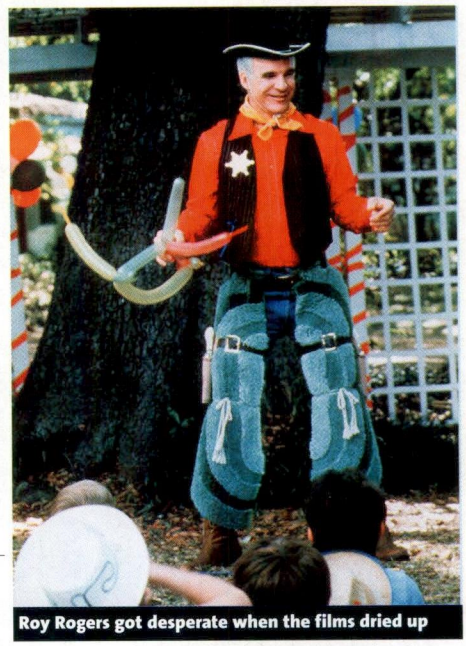
www.tmc.ndo.co.uk/children.html
★★★

Performing for kids is 'one of the most rewarding, yet most difficult, areas of magic,' claims Webmaster Magik Max. Too true – no one wants a five-year-old bursting into tears as you chop a finger off with your magic cigar cutter. So stick to the crowd-pleasers, like Soda-to-Silk and the Comedy Milk Funnel, found here alongside sagely advice on entertaining rug-rats from someone who's obviously been there, done that...

Mooseburger Camp

www.mooseburger.com/twostep.htm ★★

Imagine a hundred wannabe clowns cooped up in a tent near Minnesota, wandering day and night in their make-up, looking for small children on which to practise the humourless gurning and 'comedy' pratfalls learned in the afternoon work-shop... That is the grim reality of Mooseburger Camp. You've missed this year's jollities, but don't be too downhearted – you can register for 2001 here!


Roy Rogers got desperate when the films dried up

Learn moves at *www.juggling.org*

Juggling Information Service

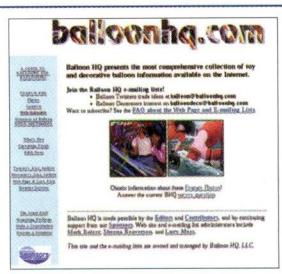
www.juggling.org ★★★★

Jaded adults walking along Brighton seafront won't even look up from their ice creams unless you're throwing chainsaws back and forth, but the average ankle-biter's eyes will light at your simple three-ball juggling. Learn all the basic moves at this portal, swap tips with other tossers and find out where to buy gear and magazines (*Oz Juggler*, anyone?). Then download some free juggleware and invent your own moves.

PICK OF THE NET

Balloon HQ

www.balloonhq.com ★★★★★



thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

Don't be fooled by the bland homepage, for behind it lurks a comprehensive guide to the world of balloons. Not the type that Richard Branson flies into mountains, but the twist-into-animals kind. There's an archive of balloon tricks, with 350 shapes to try out, complete with comments and feedback. There's also sections on how to blow the things up, using helium, making your own, how to deal with pre-teen hecklers, balloon-related software, articles on the role of the balloon in popular culture and the physics behind how they go 'pop'. Quite astonishing.

For more Kids sites, turn to Need To Know on page 107

WORDS: MATTHEW BINGHAM; PICTURES: REX, KOBAL

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AUTOSPORT.COM

www.autosport.com

PICTURES: IMAGE BANK

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Don't be cruel...

Caring for animals doesn't have to end with your dog's bowl being full. So fight for their rights online

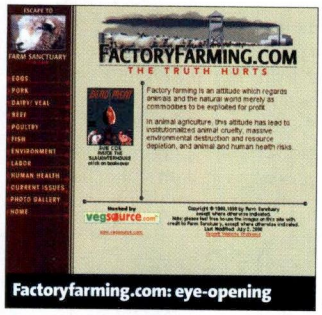
Animal Concerns Community

animalconcerns.netforchange.com

★★★★

Part of the Network for Change Web community (which includes GreenMarketplace.com, an online shopping mall providing environmentally aware products, and EnviroLink, which provides free Internet access for non-profit environmental groups), Animal Concerns brims with resources for the animal rights activist. Aside from offering information on animal-related organisations, there's also a bulletin board, where you can share ideas with others, and an excellent jobs index advertising positions in Cameroon, Jamaica, the US and UK.

Piscines may not be cuddly, but they're still capable of feeling pain



Factoryfarming.com: eye-opening

Factory Farming

www.factoryfarming.com ★★★

Have a look at Factory Farming's article on egg production and you won't mind coughing up extra dosh for free-range again! It doesn't end there: this eye-opener will tell you what your burger meant for the cow, why hog factories are a breeding ground for disease and how minorities in the meat industry are paid in loose change. Those with weak stomachs would do well to avoid the photo gallery.

NoFishing.Net

www.nofishing.net ★★★★

Piscines may not be as cuddly as lambs or calves, but they're still living, breathing animals capable of feeling pain. NoFishing.Net's aim is to make people aware that 'fishing is no fun for fish' by highlighting the suffering faced by our often overlooked underwater friends. Groovy colours and graphics, and a special section just for kids, make this a must-visit for all animal activists. ▶

BEST ANIMAL SITES ★★★★★

where can I?

LEARN ABOUT MY PET'S BEHAVIOUR?

www.healthypet.com Info about animal health and behaviour.
www.pethelp.net This site claims to help you understand your pet.
www.dogpatch.org Loads of links to help you control your pooch.

BUY PET SUPPLIES?

www.petplanet.co.uk Kit your pet out with toys and accessories.
www.pet-pyjamas.co.uk Home to some of the weirdest pet merchandise you could hope to find.

VISIT ONLINE ZOOS?

www.howletts.net Take a virtual tour round this wildlife park.
www.si.edu/natzoo An easy-to-use and humourous site that is perfect for kids to access.

LEARN HOW TO CARE FOR MY PET?

www.avma.org/care4pets
Get some excellent tips and advice from American vets on how to look after your pet.
www.purina.com Not just a marketing ploy for this North American-based pet food company; this site provides solid information for new cat and dog owners.
www.rabbit.org/faq
A whole heap of rabbit care advice.

FIND A NEWSGROUP?

talk.politics.animals
Bond with your fellow activists through the Web.

GET CHATTING?

www.animalforum.com
A great place to share advice and learn about new products.

PICK OF THE NET

PETA

www.peta-online.org

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

★★★★★

Since its launch in 1980, People for the Ethical Treatment for Animals (PETA) has grown to become the largest animal rights organisation in the world. Their philosophy, that 'animals are not ours to eat, wear, experiment on, or use for entertainment', clearly covers all the bases – as does this user-friendly, informative site. Get involved (and, believe us, after spending time on this site you'll want to) through their 'Action Alerts'; although many of the organisation's appeals are targeted at problems in the US, there's also plenty to get involved with on this side of the pond. In addition, there's an online shop on the site where the caring consumer can buy anything from humane mousetraps to Pamela Anderson's 'cruelty-free' nail polish (in a fetching pink).

Clear your conscience: visit PETA

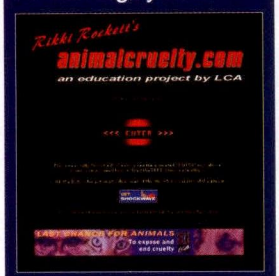
WORDS: JENNIFER KEARNS; PICTURES: ONLINE USA, REX FEATURES

Brigitte always caught her own supper

ACTIVIST'S ADVERT

Loud and proud

As any good advertiser knows, a hard sell will get your product noticed. For Guinness, those surfers riding waves of stallions did the trick; Coca-Cola told 'the world to sing' for their sugary treat.



Likewise, a good advert promoting animal activism may be just the thing to turn people who simply care into people who campaign. Rikki Rockett's AnimalCruelty.com (*www.animalcruelty.com*) may not provide tons of information, but the onslaught of provocative images and sounds will undoubtedly provide that extra push that some need to get motivated.

Liberation Animal Rights and Vegan Magazine

www.freezone.co.uk/liberationmag ★★★

Take a deep breath and prepare yourself before venturing on to this British online magazine which, in their own words, contains information that is 'graphic in both words and pictures... We believe that's the only way to expose the truth'. There's information on upcoming rallies for militant activists, including telephone numbers to call for more information and to find out about transportation to and from the sites. For the causal reader, there are enough disturbing images to make you militant! If campaigning from home is more your style, why not sign a petition, boycotting products that have been tested on animals?

RSPCA Online

www.rspca.org.uk ★★★★★

This fun and informative site is probably the best place to go if you want to get the kiddies involved in the fight for animal rights. Founded in 1824, the RSPCA was the first animal welfare organisation in the world, dedicated to protecting cattle, horses and sheep. Since then it's grown to include all sorts of furry, feathered and scaly-skinned beasties. Adopt a cyberpet (be sure to properly look after it, though, or the RSPCA will come and take it away from you), download brightly-coloured screen-savers, find out what sort of animal you're most like, join various campaigns, write to MPs and, above all, be sure to make a donation.

Burn baby, burn

Web sites that remember the fifth of November

Fireworks.co.uk

www.fireworks.co.uk ★★★

OK, we all know what blue touch-paper is, but what's a serpent in firework speak? If you want to hone up on firework terminology, head here. It's designed more for the large-scale display, hence the DTI and Civil Aviation Authority guide-lines. Still, it's handy to know that, if your do's near an airport, aerial fireworks should be limited to a height of 1500 feet above ground level. You can also use its e-cards as bonfire party invitations.

Fireworks Magazine

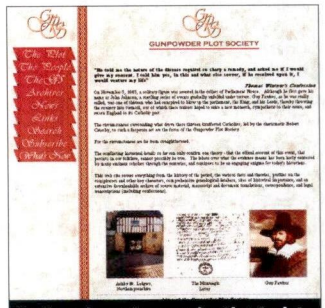
www.netcomuk.co.uk/~jfben/curr.htm ★★★★

All dressed down and no display to go to? Fear not, you *shall* go to the bonfire. John Bennett's *Fireworks* magazine is aimed at the firework industry and enthusiasts, but click on 'Display Information' and it gives a list of firework displays around the country.

Gunpowder Plot Society

www.gunpowder-plot.org ★★★★

Those in the Gunpowder Plot Society believe history is rife with falsehood when it comes to Guy Fawkes, and that there was more to the plot than a few left-footers getting out of line. The society's mission is to keep discussion about the plot going, and here you can get text downloads galore.

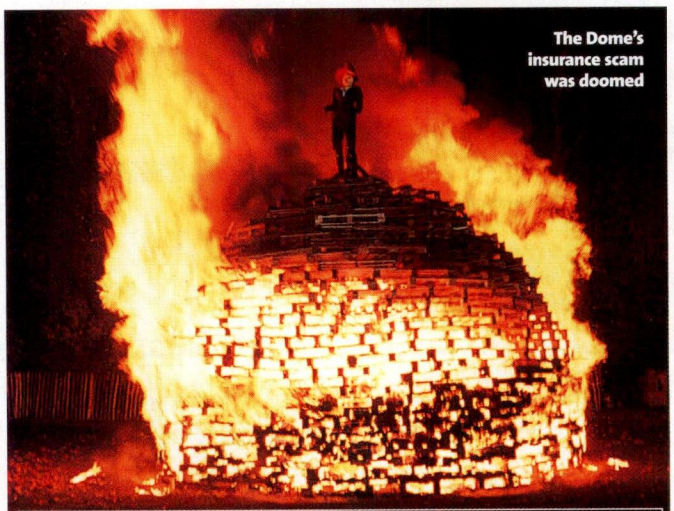


Truth seekers: Gunpowder Plot Society

UK Firework Safety

www.eig.org.uk/fws ★★★★

You may think you had the firework code drummed into you as a kid, but there's no harm in downloading a PDF of it just in case. Seriously though, anybody who's organising a firework display should check out this site from the British Pyrotechnists Association and the Explosive Industry Group. It offers instructional downloads to ensure your night goes with the right sort of bang.



The Dome's insurance scam was doomed

Gunpowder Plot & High Treason in 1605

www.innotts.co.uk/~asperges/fawkes/indexx.html ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

Need somewhere to deflect your six-year-old when they ask why a dummy gets burnt every year? Send them to this site, heaped with awards from the likes of the BBC. You can also read the words to *Remember, Remember*, in which the Pope of the time gets a right pasting: 'A penny loaf to feed ol' Pope/A farthing cheese to choke him/A pint of beer to rinse it down/A faggot of sticks to burn him...'

For more kids sites, turn to Need To Know on page 107

WORDS: SUE WEEKES

ed says

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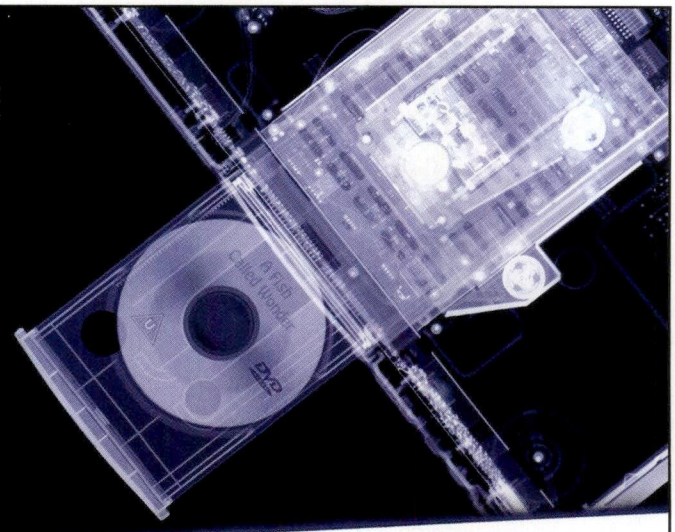


This new website helps you choose which products are right for you

When you're planning an important purchase, it pays to check with the experts at www.goldfishguide.com.

We review a whole range of products and services in depth, giving you the facts to help you make a well-informed buying decision.

We've expertly assessed all kinds of things from washing machines to vacuum cleaners, DVD players to TVs, PCs to palmtops. We've even taken a close look at online shopping and travel sites.

When you're starting to explore the market and need to know all about what's available, Goldfish Guide is indispensable. It's equally useful if you've more or less decided what you want to buy, but would like to make a final feature-by-feature comparison with similar products.

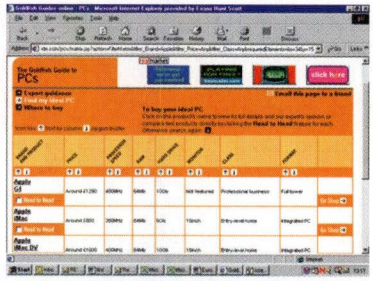
And what's more, to everyone with Internet access it's free.

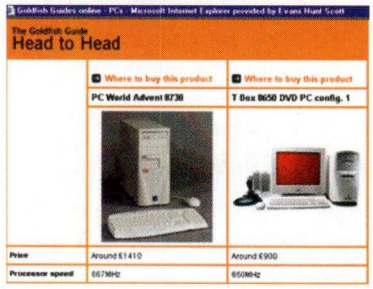
Expert opinions you can trust

Let's say you're looking for a new computer – not an easy buying decision these days. Choose one that isn't suitable, and you've made a very expensive mistake.

So who do you trust to help you decide what's the best buy for you? Salespeople may only recommend the models they stock, and they may not be as knowledgeable as you'd like. With all the technical jargon, it's easy to get confused.

That's where our impartial experts come in. They really know their subject. For example, the team reviewing computers includes Jeremy Spencer, with 12 years' experience as editor of Britain's biggest selling PC monthly, *Computer Shopper*. All our reviewers give you a completely unbiased opinion.





Your step-by-step buying guide

What happens when you click on www.goldfishguide.com? Simply select the type of product you're interested in from a pull-down menu, and our experts start to help you right away.

First, there's a general guide to what to look for when you're buying. An example from the PC guide is 'Graphics accelerator: go for 8Mb as a minimum, and 16Mb or 32Mb for games or graphics applications.'

You don't know what a 'graphics accelerator' is? Just go to our 'jargon buster' and you'll find it clearly explained.

But perhaps you're already familiar with this kind of background information. In that case, go straight to our review of products. PCs are divided into sections according to whether you want an entry level, mid-range or professional model for home or business use.

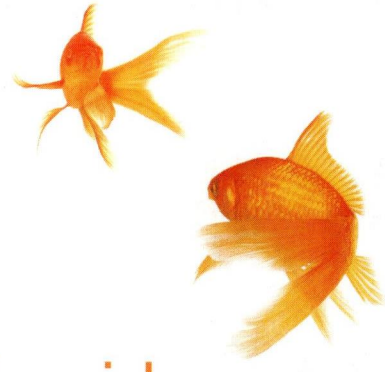
Find your personal best buy

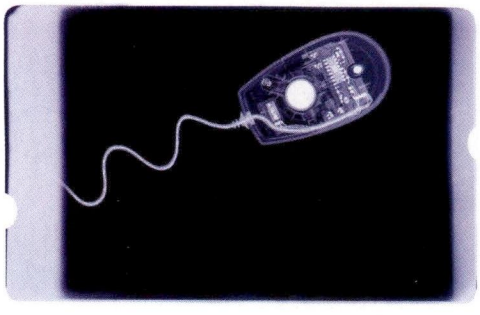
Browse through the section that interests you, or make an initial shortlist, by selecting a particular make or price range for example. Next you can refine your search even further by specifying other features you want.

When you've read our experts' comments, and found some products that have everything you're looking for, you can compare them head to head and decide exactly which one is your personal best buy.

Then if you're interested in purchasing it online we can take you direct to a reputable retail site. Or maybe you'd rather look for a deal in the high street.

Either way, you can be confident that you're making a well-informed decision based on facts, not sales talk. Inside information from Goldfish Guide could stop you buying something that isn't right for you. And save you from wasting hundreds of pounds.





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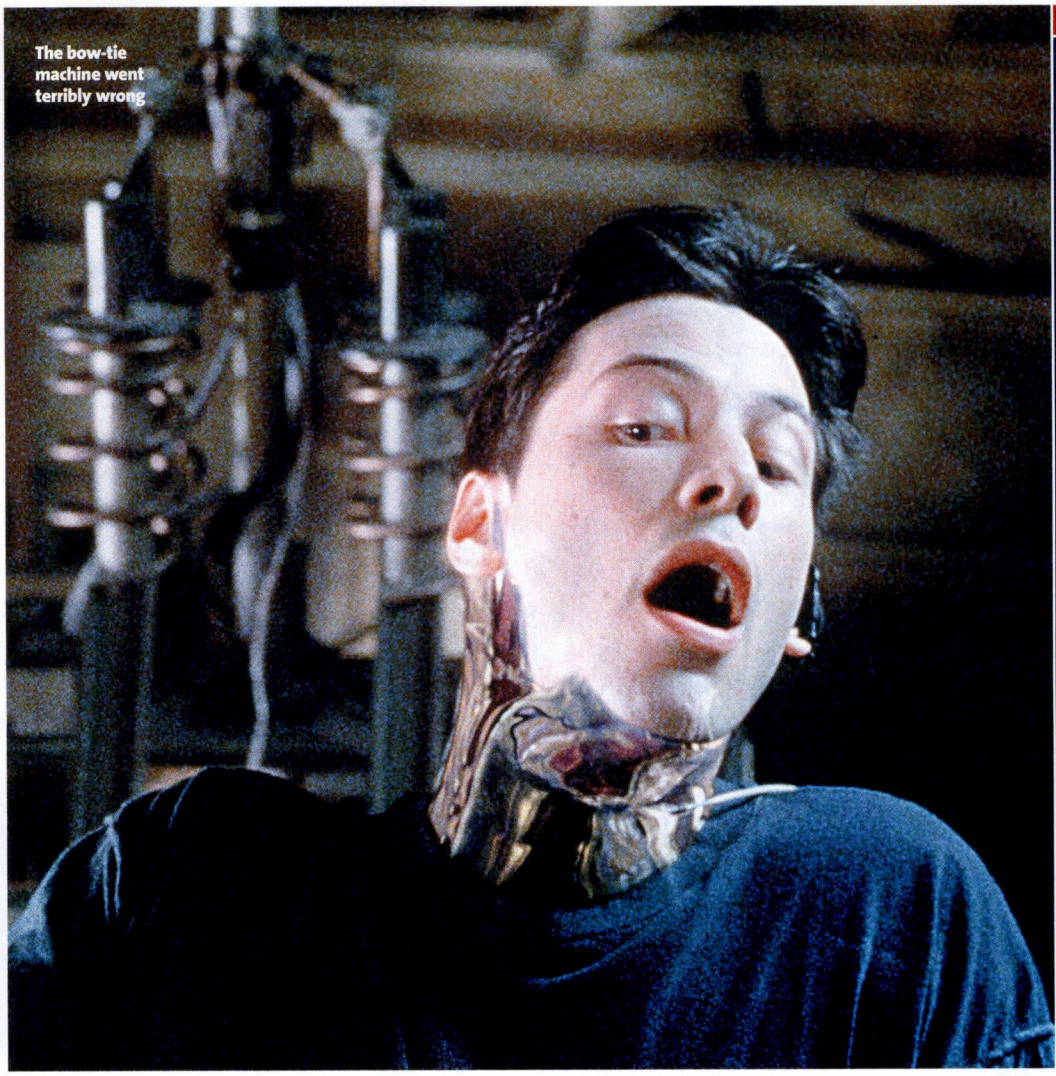
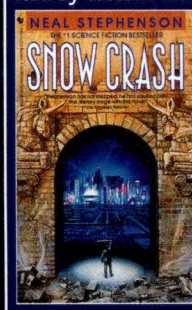

The bow-tie machine went terribly wrong

IT LIVES

SF COMES TO LIFE

Virtual worlds are nothing new in science fiction. William Gibson is given a lot of the credit for developing ideas of virtual reality in his novel *Nueromancer*, but a brilliant depiction of what online virtual reality could be like is presented in Neal Stephenson's *Snow Crash*. The Street is where things happen in Stephenson's Metaverse: a strip of virtual real estate that runs the entire circumference of a virtual globe, and is inhabited by custom-made avatars



that hang out in an alternative reality. You can access it from your home computer, or from consoles dotted around the real-world streets, much as if you could log on to the Internet today using a pay-phone. If you want a small taste of Stephenson's vision check out Active Worlds, or otherwise read an interview with the man himself at *www.addict.com/ATN/issues/1.07/Features/Neal_Stephenson*.

Just like the real world

Why bother leaving home when it's all being recreated for you online?

Café Nirvana

www.cafe-nirvana.com ★★★★

No, nothing to do with the popular beat combo; a 3D chat room and centre for creative pursuits. Café Nirvana was developed in the early 90s, but you can now wander around the library or art gallery or head straight to the 3D chat room. You'll have to download a small programme to participate, but there's no need to leave a tip.

Worlds.com

www.worlds.net/index2.html ★★★★

With a pretty slick presentation that makes many of the other virtual sites appear geeky, the focus is strongly on younger users, with cool and trendy virtual hangouts for them to interact in while talking about the latest Britney video. You can even watch live musical events – if your idea of music is Seal and UB40. Again, you need to download the client software and, at a whopping 8.7Mb, it takes a while.

Oz Gate

www.ozgate.com ★★★

As in *The Wizard of...*, rather than Australia. You'll need to download the OnLive Traveller software but, once there, it's great to wander around the growing number of rooms, which include a rather funky Stonehenge and a Colossus room. The areas are often full, though, so you may have to search around to squeeze yourself in somewhere.

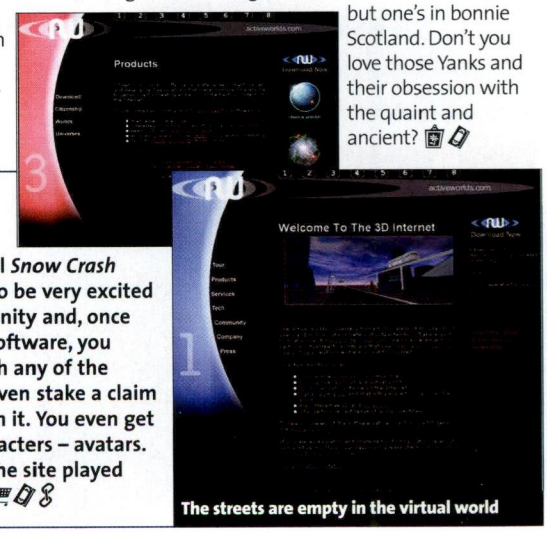
PICK OF THE NET

Active Worlds

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

www.activeworlds.com ★★★★★

If you've read Neal Stephenson's novel *Snow Crash* (see above panel), then you're going to be very excited about Active Worlds. It's an online virtual community and, once you've downloaded the reasonably small client software, you can stroll into the virtual shopping mall, chat with any of the thousands of people who might lurk there, and even stake a claim on your own bit of virtual real estate and build on it. You even get to pick how you look from a range of virtual characters – avatars. Make sure it's a pretty one, though, as last year the site played host to a virtual Hollywood movie premiere.



The streets are empty in the virtual world

Virtual Earth

www.virtualearth.com ★★★

Rather than look towards new, imaginary worlds, Virtual Earth looks at the one we live on. It uses Java or QuickTime, so there's no downloading. The pictures are a tad small, but you can move around and get a good view of the limited, but growing choice of locations. Most are in America (beautiful Big Sur's one of our favourites), but one's in bonnie Scotland. Don't you love those Yanks and their obsession with the quaint and ancient?

WORDS: SHAUN MARIN; PICTURES: KOBAL

DISAPPEARANCES

Missing in action

One minute they're there, the next... we look at the greatest disappearing acts

The Escape Route Of Martin Bormann

www.anesi.com/east/bormann.htm

★★★

It was long speculated that Adolf Hitler's notorious henchman, Martin Bormann, found refugee after the war in South America, but did you know that the entire Nazi elite actually fled in a fleet of submarines to Antarctica? Hey, it's on the Internet, so it must be true. As this slightly tasteless but revealing site reveals, it looks like Bormann actually met his fate in Berlin.

The Bermuda Triangle

www.bermuda-triangle.org ★★★

The Bermuda Triangle is said to be a disorientating vortex in space and time where navigation becomes impossible; if that sounds all too familiar, it's probably because you've already visited Web sites with a similar effect. However, for fairly smooth sailing try this fantastically detailed site, which even lists every ship and aircraft that has disappeared in the area.

Picnic At Hanging Rock

w3.one.net/~voyager/picnic.html

★★★

What a disappointment! Apparently, the story of three schoolgirls who vanished in the vicinity of a mysterious Australian beauty spot is fictionional. Made into a popular film from the book of the same name, many people assumed that some kind of Aboriginal spookiness took place. Not so, says the spoilsport behind this incredibly comprehensive site.

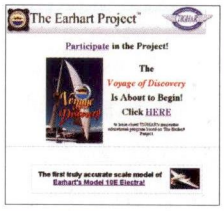
THE NET'S FAVOURITE

The Earhart Project

www.tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/AEdescr.html ★★★★★

thenet ★★★★★ AWARD

Pioneering aviator Amelia Earhart vanished in 1937 while attempting to circumnavigate the globe. And, while her achievements have been eclipsed by wild conspiracy theories, the Earhart Project team is now close to proving that her plane simply crashed. It's still a good detective story, though.



POW MIA

www.aiipowmia.com ★★★★

The extraordinary revelation provided by this site is that the Cold War was a far hotter affair than is popularly imagined, with many hostile acts that resulted in the shooting down of American aircraft. That some of the crews might still be in captivity is a tantalising concept, and here you can find a vast amount of information on the entire vexed subject of prisoners of war.

The Museum Of Unnatural Mystery

www.unmuseum.org ★★★

They pulled the biggest vanishing act in history, but could some dinosaurs have really survived in remote corners of the world?

WORDS: JOHN GOSLING; PICTURES: REX FEATURES

One of the best contenders is the so-called mok'ele-mbembe in the Belgium Congo though it swiftly becomes clear, upon reading this well-presented round-up, that the majority of evidence amounts to nothing more than dubious stories and grainy photographs. Shame.

Lost on Everest

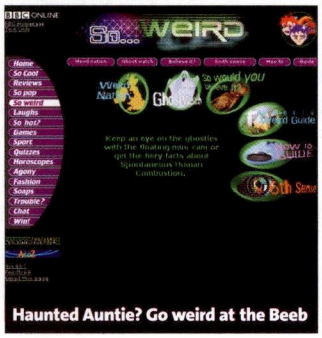
www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/everest/lost/mystery ★★★★★

What possesses anyone to climb Everest is a mystery in itself, and indeed many lives have been sacrificed in pursuit of this strange goal. Sometimes, however, even the mountains have to give up their ghosts; and recently the frozen body of the British climber George Mallory was discovered, 75 years after he vanished. A superb site that even contains the radio messages sent during the discovery. Look out for the coded language used by the search team: 'I've got a thermos of juice and some Snicker bars. Why don't you guys have a picnic with me?', used to keep rival teams from blagging the find.

Lucan always came out of hiding for a Woody Allen premiere

BEST WEIRD SITES ★★★★★

where can I?



Haunted Auntie? Go weird at the Beeb

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www.peoplefinders.co.uk UK based service that will track down old friends or relatives.
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FIND LOST PROPERTY?

www.internetlostandfound.com Search for and post information on your lost property.
www.unclaimedbaggage.com/home.htm Take advantage of someone else's misfortune.

FIND WEIRD NEWS?

www.joeha.com/whiteboard A collection of stories to email your mates.
www.bbc.co.uk/weird The Beeb comes over all weird, with a haunted house and 'ghostcam'.

FIND THE REAL X-FILES?

www.seti-inst.edu Meet the world's top ET-hunters here.
www.ufomag.co.uk *UFO Mag* offers lots of thought-provoking debate.
foia.fbi.gov/unusual.htm Over 1,600 pages of previously secret material from the FBI.

LEARN ABOUT CULTS?

cti.itc.virginia.edu/~jkh8x/soc257/home.html Meet the maddest cults in the world here.
www.mayhem.net/crime/cults.html Dangerous cults go over the edge.
www.factnet.org Newsletter dedicated to tracking scary sects.

FIND OUT ABOUT AREA 51?

www.ufomind.com/area51 A hefty resource on the secret base.
www.nauticom.net/users/ata/area51.html Excellent site with travel tips.

FIND A CONSPIRACY THEORY?

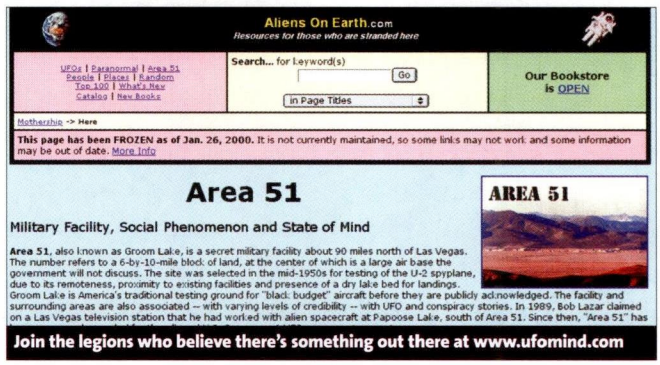
www.disinfo.com Conspiracies for the whole family.
www.conspire.com Sceptical tales with tongue placed firmly in cheek.

JOIN A MAILING LIST?

Meet fellow sleuths by sending an email marked 'info mysteryshopper' to ***majordomo@mLists.net***

GET CHATTING?

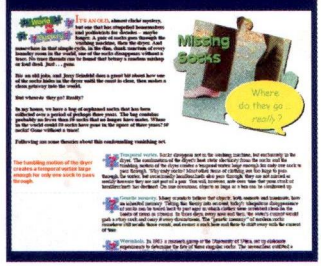
Discuss ideas with other conspiracy nuts at ***discserver.snap.com/Indices/62593.html***.

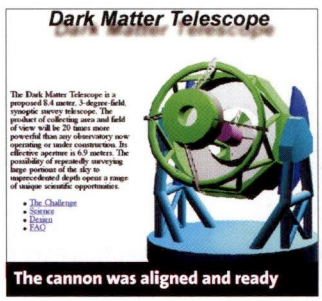


BERMUDA SOCKS

The drawer of doom

You may never see a dinosaur in the flesh but, rest assured, almost every day you participate in a genuine world- class mystery – something so insidious that, were it to become common knowledge, it would rock the very foundations of science. We're talking about lost socks. For an in-depth analysis of the quantum mechanics behind lost socks, try the dissertation at ***www. swcp.com/~breardon quantum.html***; while for the layman, the theory is presented at ***members.aol.com/swagner911/socks.htm***. Do not despair, however – a solution is at hand, as a visit to ***www.sockpro.com/ products.htm*** will reveal.





The cannon was aligned and ready

An absent-minded universe seems to have misplaced most of its bulk

The Greatest Mystery Of The Sea

www.gibnynex.gi/home/jimwatt/mary/index.htm ★★★★

The *Mary Celeste* was discovered adrift in 1872, her crew having vanished into thin air without a sign of struggle and the ship in apparently good repair. What happened to her is still a mystery, and long may it remain so. That the crew might have been abducted by aliens is enormous fun and not even impossible, though for the purely scholarly approach this site is unbeatable.

The Strange Disappearance of Miss Jean Spangler

home.earthlink.net/~welkerlots/jean.htm ★★★

There's nothing like a good celebrity scandal, and they don't come much juicer than this one – involving, as it does, a Hollywood showgirl and respected actor Kirk Douglas. Jean Spangler vanished in October 1949, leaving behind only a note said to be intended for Douglas, implying she was seeking an abortion. A fascinating tale told in lurid and detailed style.

Dark Matter Telescope

www.dmtelescope.org ★★★

Here on planet Earth we may have lost people, planes and even entire species; but this absent-mindedness has nothing on the universe, which seems to have misplaced most of its bulk. The search for the so-called 'missing matter' that should essentially glue the universe together is gathering pace, and for a basic explanation of the physics, this site is a particularly useful starting point.

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Toptable ***www.toptable.co.uk***
Uncorked ***www.uncorked.co.uk***

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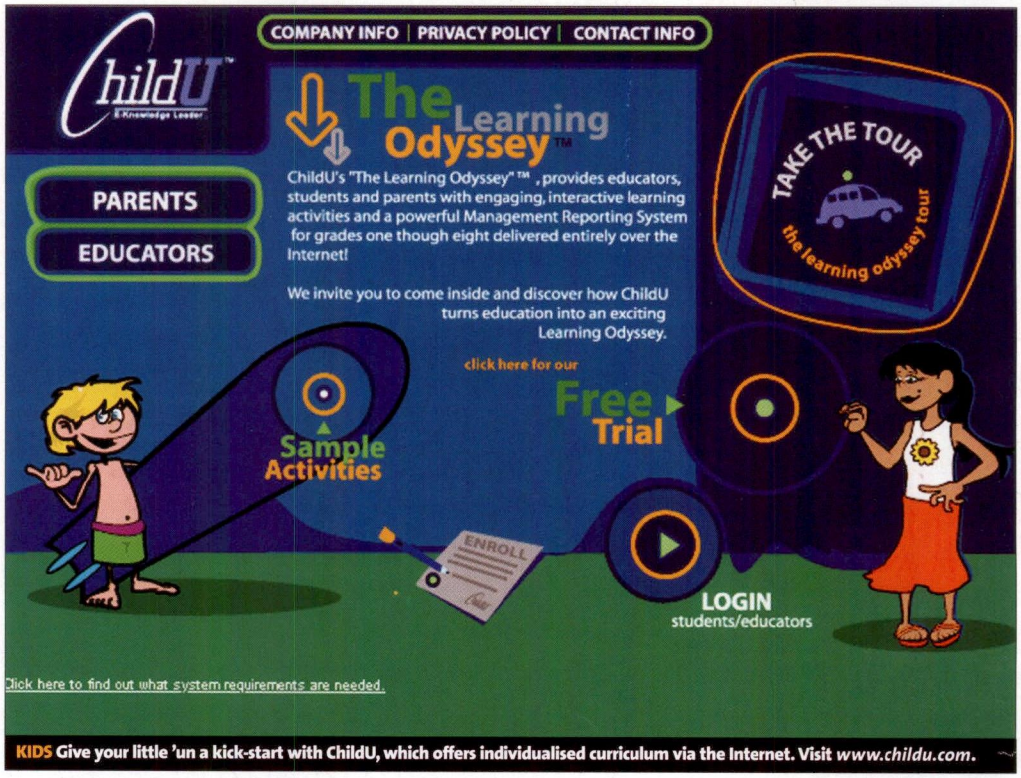

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CITV **www.citv.co.uk**
FunSchool **www.funschool.com**
Kidscom **www.kidscom.com/orakc/Mousers/mouse.html**
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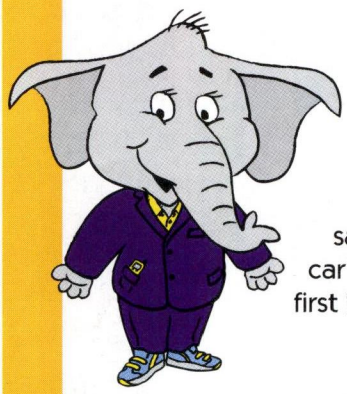

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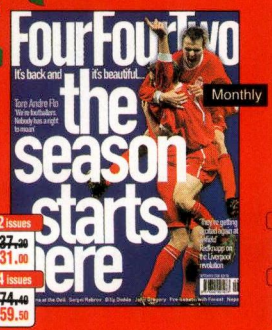

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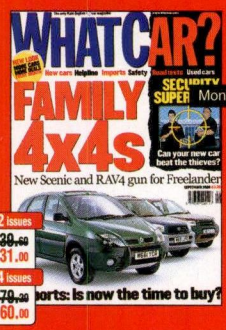

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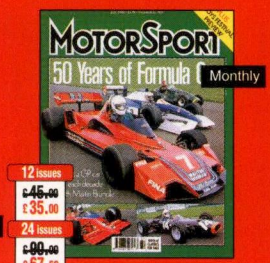

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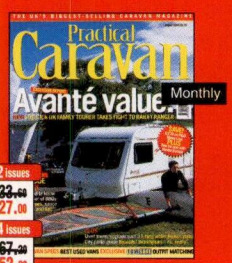

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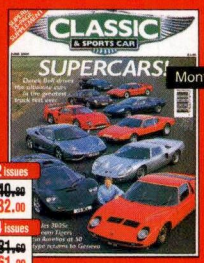

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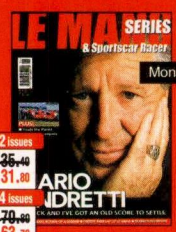

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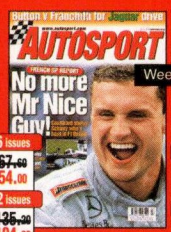

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Monthly
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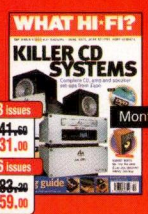

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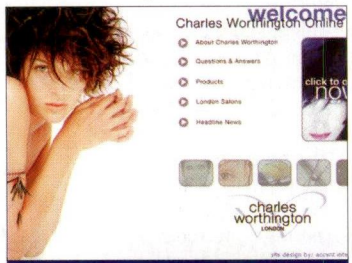

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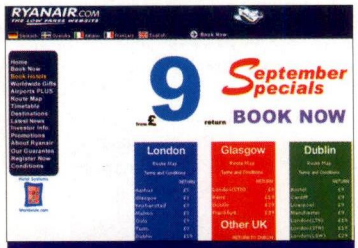

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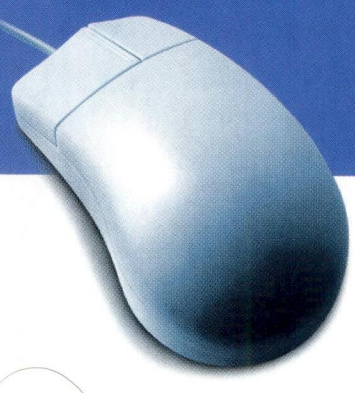

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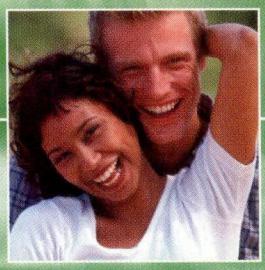

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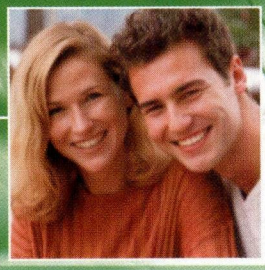

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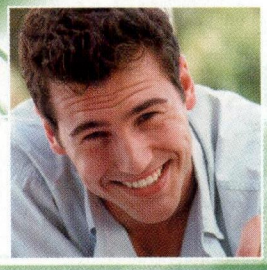

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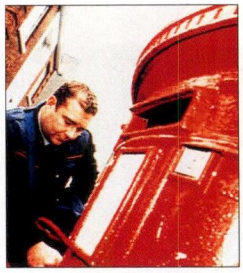
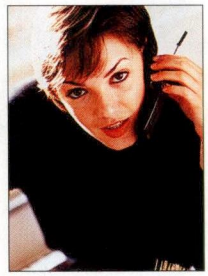
And now you have even more choice, thanks to FSmail, our Web-based email service, which you can check anywhere in the world – you just need an Internet terminal! For more information, see *www.fsmail.net*.



Communication options

With email, there's always the danger that you might need to read your messages when you aren't near a computer. Now that needn't be a problem – you can be notified of your email on your mobile phone, thanks to Freeserve Alerts, which converts your messages to SMS. Or, if you have a mobile Internet (WAP) phone, you can receive your messages in full.
www.freeserve.com/communications

Talking email



Finally, there's Speechmail. This clever option lets you to access your email messages over the phone, without a computer. And as you would expect, there's no subscription charge for Freeserve members.

To access the service, simply sign up at the address below. You'll be given a phone number which you can use to access your mail. You can ring your number from any phone – including your mobile. So no matter how important the message, you won't need to sit in front of a computer screen.
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Some of the great channels available on Freeserve

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So with help from Freeserve, you'll soon be at home on the Internet.

Great Content

At Freeserve we don't just strive to bring you free Web space, unlimited free email addresses and a choice of Internet access packages. We're also dedicated to bringing you the very best content on the Internet and collecting it all under one roof: on the Freeserve Today page at *www.freeserve.com*.

To make the most of Today, make it your homepage on the Web and check it every day. That way you'll get a fantastic digest of all the latest news, weather and sport just as it happens – and the opportunity to explore the events more thoroughly on the relevant channels, of which there are lots.

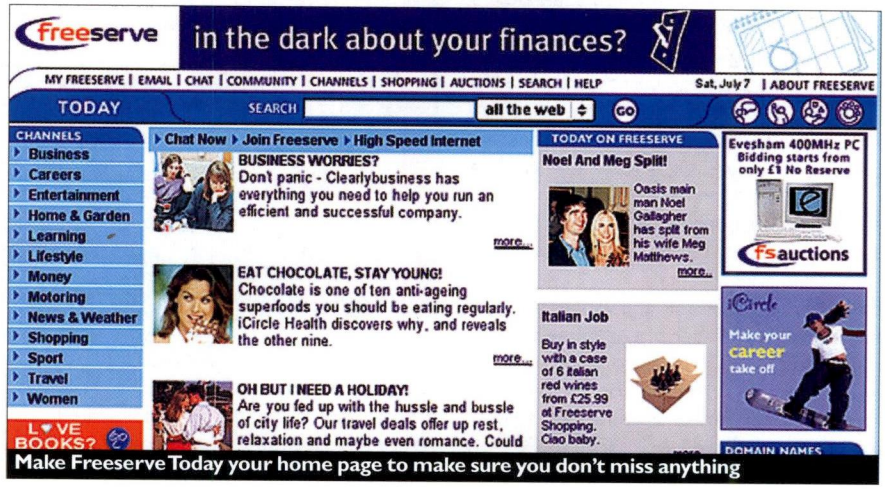
Freeserve for life

Freeserve isn't limited to hard news. Try the feature-packed Life channel, follow the stars with the Entertainment channel, plan a holiday with the Travel channel, or get talking on our Chat channel. If you have a small business, you shouldn't miss the Business channel. Or there are Sport, Learning and Money channels, as well as the women's channel at iCircle.

Finally, the fortnightly newsletter will keep you up-to-date with all that's going on at Freeserve.

www.freeserve.com

The Freeserve News channel brings you all the latest events so you can stay informed



Make Freeserve Today your home page to make sure you don't miss anything

Sign up online at www.freeserve.com or pick up the CD at Dixons, Currys, PC World or The Link. It's free.

Business

Whether you've got an established business or are a newcomer, Clearlybusiness.com, associated with both Freeserve and Barclays, can help. It's a complete online resource aimed at reducing hassle as well as your costs!

Careers

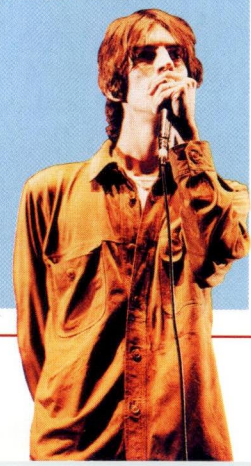
You're wired, now get hired – not fired. The Careers channel lets you search databases of 70,000 jobs nationwide; you can apply online, or submit your CV and wait for employers in your area to come to you!

Chat

Our ever-popular chat service is a great hit. You can use our new 3D chat rooms to get around and explore virtual reality worlds, or even set up your own chatgroups.

Entertainment

The latest film and music releases are all on the Freeserve Entertainment channel. From Mozart to Moby and Antonioni to *Antz*, it's all in Entertainment.



Health

The Freeserve Health channel will help you stay in good order. The channel is packed full of information and advice on everything from herbal medicine through to the latest medical breakthroughs.

Image Bank:Retna

freeserve
www.freeserve.com

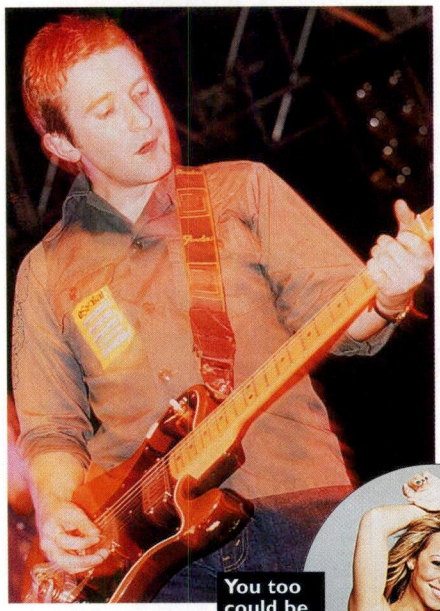
Start singing the blues!

Get ready to hit the big time with a new competition offered by Freeserve and Cartel Records. You could be about to become a star for the price of a stamp!

If you have your own band or fancy yourself as a bit of a singer, then you'll appreciate how difficult it can be to get yourself noticed. You'll know that there are thousands of other stars-in-the-making out there, and even though you're sure that you're better than most, you need to get a lucky break before you'll make it to *Top of the Pops*.

Well, keep reading, because you could be in luck. Freeserve and Cartel Records are this month offering you the opportunity to have your music professionally recorded. Imagine – you'll have CDs to present to anyone and everyone. Whether you fancy yourself as the next Craig David, Basement Jaxx, Oasis or Madonna, the chance of fame could be that one step closer. This is the chance to get your music heard by millions of people!

Basically, the prize is this: the winner (or winners, if you a member of a band!) will be transported to the Cartel Records Studios down in sunny Bournemouth for the day from wherever he, she or they lives, all expenses paid! They will then spend the whole day working with the company's sound engineer, recording the track that won them the competition. Once the recording has received the professional treatment, it will be laid down on to 100 promotional CDs. These will then be presented to the winner for them to take and give away to whoever they like!



You too could be a star

Best of all, the competition is open to all music genres, from rock to reggae and garage to gospel. So if you specialise in heavy punk don't worry, you'll have just as much chance as everyone else who enters the competition. And you can be a single artist, a group or a band.

This is how it works: to enter the competition, all you have to do is send a copy of one of your original tracks to Cartel Records, either on CD, cassette, Minidisc or vinyl, along with all your contact details. Cartel Records will then listen to all the tracks that are entered, and pick the three artists that they believe have the most potential. The three chosen tracks submitted by the winners will then be posted on the Freeserve site, for the whole of the world to hear. Everyone who listens to the tracks will be asked to submit their vote for their favourite, and the one that receives the most votes will be the winner. But, of course, the two 'runners-up' can't really lose – their tracks will also be heard by lots of people, and also have the prestige of being selected by Cartel Records as potential stars.

Entries to the competition have to be received by Cartel records by October 31, so if you don't have anything to submit yet, be sure to get recording something soon so you don't miss the deadline! The winning tracks will be posted on the Freeserve site in November, during which time visitors to the site will be invited to vote for their favourite. And the prizes don't end there – everyone who votes for their favourite track on the site will be in with a chance of a prize, as they are entered into a draw.

For more details of the competitions, see *www.freeserve.com/competitions*.

CARTEL
CARTEL RECORDS

CHANNEL GUIDE

Some of the great channels available on Freeserve

Homes and Gardens

Everything you'll need to look after your home and garden is on the Freeserve Homes and Gardens channel; from maintenance, to advice on how to make moving house easier!

Learning

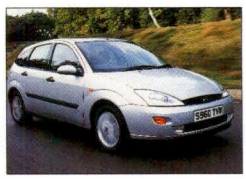
From SATS right through to A-level, Freeserve Learning is there to help you through your studies with an interactive learning environment to encourage learning skills. And now it's possible to take an online course, thanks to BlueU.com.

Lifestyle

The Lifestyle channel is an exclusive features magazine which brings you the latest lowdown on everything that matters, online and off. Whatever you're into, you'll enjoy Lifestyle.

Money

Freeserve will help you keep your finances healthy with expert advice. Whether you want savings tips, a mortgage or advice on choosing an ISA, you can keep your pocket full with Freeserve.



Motoring

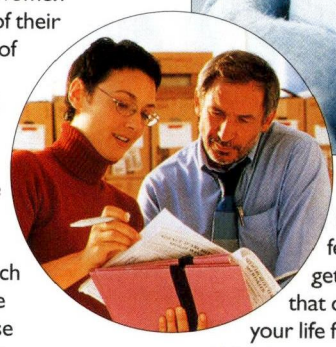
Get on the road with the new Freeserve Motoring channel, which is your one-stop shop for everything car-related. You can buy your new car and arrange your insurance and finances online, with some great savings to be had.

Web women

iCircle.com, the Freeserve Women's channel, has just added some great new features to its pages. This month you can win a career makeover and chat about babies!

It's vital to be in a career that you enjoy. After all, the chances are that you'll spend more time doing your job than any other activity. But what if you aren't happy with your position at work, don't know what to do next, or simply need some inspiration from other women who have made it to the top?

Well, the new Careers channel from iCircle.com could help you make the next step. Packed full of advice for women who want to make the most of their job, the channel provides lots of features and help on how to get the job that you want, and how to make the most of it once you are there. Discover your real goals in life with 'What really motivates you?', the iCircle.com unique test devised by leading life coach Judy Wall. Then get one-to-one advice on how to achieve those goals with the Mentoring Service. iCircle.com has gathered together a group of inspiring women who can offer advice – you simply post your questions online to your chosen mentor, and you will receive a personal response.



Each month the channel is offering one member the chance to win a day with a top London careers consultancy to receive a complete career makeover. iCircle.com will talk to the winner about what she hopes to achieve, and then follow her progress over the next few months to see how she gets on. It's a great opportunity that could quite literally change your life forever.

Whether you're looking to get to the top of the careers ladder or to down-shift to juggle work and family, iCircle.com Careers channel is there to offer advice and support 24 hours a day. Go to *www.icircle.com* for more information and the chance to give your career the boost it deserves!

Baby talk...

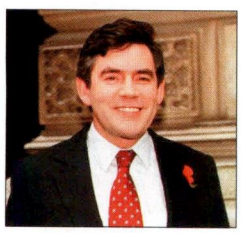
The latest addition to the iCircle.com parenting channel, babyworld.co.uk, is chat – giving you the chance to get together with other expectant and new mums, and exchange tips or discuss worries. Our breastfeeding support chat, moderated by an experienced mum, has proved very popular, with members joining in every Thursday night with questions from the best position to adopt, to how long to carry on breastfeeding and how to cope in public places.

Babyworld.co.uk also runs online antenatal classes, led by a National Childbirth Trust teacher, with tips on how to cope with the birth and the weeks afterwards. You can ask any question you like in complete anonymity, with subjects ranging from what kind of birth to choose, to how to deal with testy, wakeful babies in those early months.

The online antenatal classes are so successful that, after the birth, many of the new mums arrange to meet up in 'real life'. For example, the February 2000 club recently went to Stratford-on-Avon for a weekend together!

Other new arrivals at babyworld.co.uk include four discussion forums: for single parents, teenage parents, older parents and step-families.

Visit *www.babyworld.co.uk* soon and become part of the community!



News

Get tomorrow's papers today with this superb news service. You'll get all the latest UK and foreign stories, together with business news and a complete rundown of headlines as they happen.

Shopping

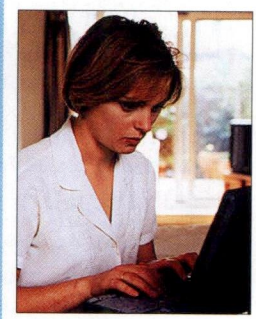
The Freeserve Shopping channel can provide flowers or food, a car or a computer. Look out for great deals and savings from SHOP@freeserve and now the new Marketplace retailers.

Sport

Whatever your sport, you'll find it on Freeserve. Football, tennis, cricket, rugby, motorsport, golf; you can get the results and follow your heroes on the Sport channel.

Travel

Click on the Freeserve Travel channel for instant access to a database of 70,000 flights and holidays worldwide. There are always sensational last-minute deals on offer.



Women

Web women need look no further than the Freeserve women's channel, iCircle.com, for the latest features, information and advice.

Retna; PA; Image Bank; Autocar

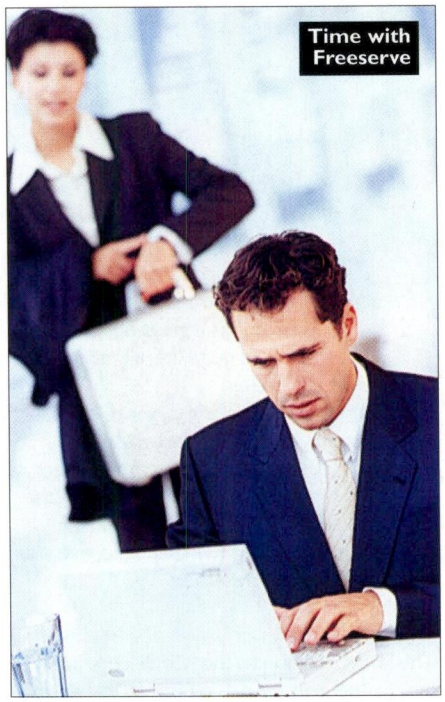
Time on your hands

You now have even more control over the charges you pay to use the Internet, thanks to the three great packages offered by Freeserve. Simply pick the most suitable for you!

Everyone who uses the Internet does so in a different way. Some people have Web access at work or at college, so their Net usage is light, and confined primarily to the evenings. Others spend hours on the Internet, searching for everything they can think of before finally logging off. Still more will log on for a couple of minutes a few times a day just to check their email, and nothing more.

In other words, everyone expects something different from their ISP. That's where Freeserve comes in. At Freeserve, we aim to cater for differing needs with Freeserve Time (*www.freeserve.com/time*). Freeserve Time is an array of three packages which offer different things to different people, depending on what is needed. But all are designed to get you onto the Internet as cheaply as possible.

And there's more: Freeserve was the first Internet Service Provider to abandon subscriptions – the monthly fees for the privilege of accessing the Internet. This is completely separate from access call charges, which are collected by your telephone company, and have, until recently, been out of the hands of Freeserve. But now that's all changed, and Freeserve is able to offer its members an even better deal.



The first option, No Ties Freeserve Time, involves no monthly fee. All you do is pay your existing telephone company the cost of the local call to connect to the Internet, and no money to Freeserve. This is the standard free-access model which Freeserve pioneered, and is excellent for light Internet users.

The second option, Off Peak Freeserve Time, entitles you to unlimited Internet access from 6pm until 8am on weekdays and all day at weekends, for a monthly charge of just £5.99. Great if you're at work, school or college during the day.

The final option we offer is Unlimited Freeserve Time, which gives you unmetered, unlimited access to the Internet 24 hours a day, seven days a week. But that's not all the monthly £10 fee entitles you to: you get £10 worth of national or international calls included.

For more details on how you can find the package to suit your surfing needs, check out *www.freeserve.com/time*.

All are designed to get you onto the Internet as cheaply as possible

NEW ON FREESERVE

Check out some of our great new features

Researching on the Internet

Anyone who has ever had to study for a qualification will know how much time is spent poring over books and searching through weighty tomes for relevant articles. But students and professionals who want to conduct research without going to the library are now in luck, thanks to a new collaboration between Freeserve and ingenta.

ingenta, the UK top 20 Web site targeting academic and professional users, operates the BIDS scheme on behalf of the UK government. BIDS, a network information service, allows the user to search a large database of articles from thousands of journals for research purposes. It is currently used by over 70 percent of Higher Education institutions.

The collaboration means that students will be able to access the database through Freeserve, even if they can't make it to the local library. In addition, students will also benefit from the great content on Freeserve, including news and sport bulletins, online shopping and entertainment listings.

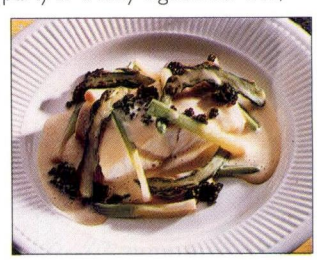
For more information, see the Freeserve Learning channel at the address below.

www.freeserve.com/learning

Cooking up a treat

If you fancy yourself as the next Jamie Oliver but don't have the time to perfect your skills, you'll be pleased to hear about a new collaboration between Freeserve and e-licious.co.uk. Available now on the Freeserve Lifestyle channel at *www.freeeserve.com/lifestyle*, e-licious allows all budding chefs the chance to create their own personalised cookbooks and planners, complete with personalised shopping lists, which save a lot of time at the supermarket! Freeserve users can also access the vast e-licious recipe database and browse through recipes submitted from all over the world.

Whether you're having a dinner party or a cosy night in for two, e-licious can help – recipes can be re-calculated to account for any number of people. There's even an 'e-converter' on the site, which will convert weights from imperial to metric, and vice-versa.



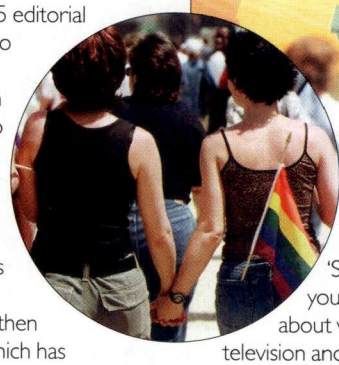
For more information and some gourmet treats, see *www.freeserve.com/lifestyle*.

At the end of the Rainbow

Freeserve has teamed up with the UK's largest gay and lesbian Web site to provide a unique and valuable service

Here at Freeserve we recognise that people from all walks of life use the Internet: our members, which total nearly two million, are a varied bunch and all are looking for different things from us. It's with this in mind that Freeserve and the Rainbow Network, the largest gay and lesbian site on the Internet, have formed a unique and exciting partnership.

This great new content can be found on the Freeserve Lifestyle channel at ***www.freeserve.com/lifestyle***, containing over 45 editorial sections and providing access to 15,000 pages.



No matter where you live in the UK, you'll find something to do or see in your local area on the site. There's news of events and things to do, including theatre, music, literature and cinema, as well as plenty of advice on the latest fashions. If you're feeling active then check out the sport section, which has details of all sorts of events happening across the world. And if you're feeling in the mood for a holiday, there are guides to cities and countries across the world written by experienced travel writers.

If you'd rather stay at home instead and take it easy, the 'Staying In' section will provide you with all you need to know about what's worth catching on television and radio, and what's not!

There's also a great section called 'Issues', which helps address all those questions that you might have. For example, there's lots of information on groups that you can join, either national or locally, gay and lesbian specific news, finance information and plenty of health advice.

The site isn't just limited to serious stuff, though. There are always loads of competitions to enter, and you can send a range of e-cards or join in the buzzing conversation on the gay and lesbian chat!

In fact, there's something for just about everyone on the site, which is what prompted the collaboration between Freeserve and the Rainbow Network in the first place: 'This agreement underlines the commitment of Freeserve to provide content that is relevant and useful for everyone,' says Frank Keeling, Chief Operating Officer of Freeserve. 'Rainbow Network provides content, products and services relevant to a significant proportion of the UK population that might otherwise be under-served.'

www.freeserve.com/lifestyle

Place your bid now

FSauctions, the Freeserve Auctions channel, has become even easier to use thanks to a great new look. And this month you have an even better reason to visit, as there are a number of great offers to celebrate the new site. These include a return to the FSauctions '£1' offers, where many lots start bidding at just one pound! There will also be some amazing computing and electrical bargains on offer, so be sure to take a look at the site!

If you've never used FSauctions, be prepared for a treat. If you're a collector of something, be it coins, dolls, stamps or even football programmes, then it's always worth having a scout around the site using the powerful search engine.

As for the bidding process itself: online auctions are really easy to use. For more details on exactly how FSauctions works, visit the site at the address below.

www.fsauctions.co.uk.

Helping to keep you in touch

If you've ever missed a phone call because you've been on the Internet, you'll know how frustrating it can be. But now that needn't be the case ever again, thanks to a brilliant new device from Freeserve, called Call Manager. Now you needn't go to the trouble and expense of having a second phone line installed!

Basically, the Freeserve Call Manager (which is completely subscription free) works like this: when you are on the Internet and you receive an incoming call, a small icon flashes up on the screen telling you so. You then have a number of options – you can decide to disconnect from the Internet and take the call immediately, or you can choose to answer it over your PC using Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP). Or, if the call is for someone else in the house, for example, you can have it transfered to another number – perhaps a mobile. These diverted calls are the only calls you have to pay for – at a rate of 10 pence per minute.

Or you might decide that you don't want to take the call after all – in which case you can switch the caller onto voicemail or simply leave them with a pre-recorded message asking them to call you later.

For more details, see ***www.freeserve.com/callmanager.***

Image Bank; Retna; Online USA

freeserve
www.freeserve.com

Love is in the air

People from all corners of the world can now connect, thanks to Freeserve.

Below are two examples which will show you exactly the influence that the Internet can have!

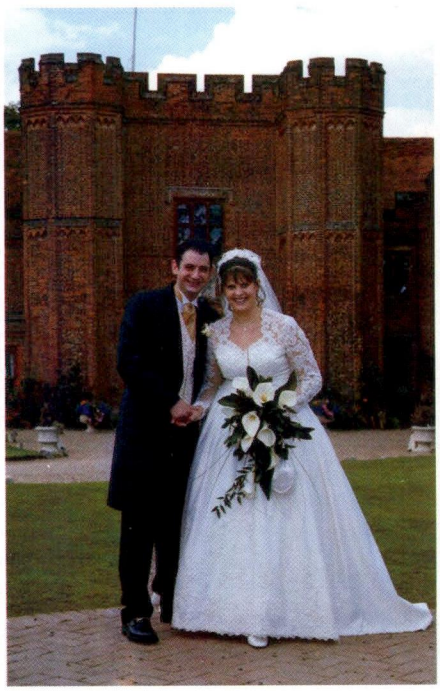
Don't let it ever be said that the Internet doesn't have the power to change your life. That it can is evident at Freeserve this month, with two couples declaring their devotion to each other!

Wedding bells have recently been ringing at Freeserve, after Claire Vandervert and her fiance Bradden Fedder were married after originally meeting in a Freeserve Chat room. The couple met at the end of last year through the rooms and, after exchanging numbers, began chatting every day, both over the Internet and on mobiles – sometimes until as late as three in the morning!

Bradden, 30, who works in Oxford, came down to Tolworth, Surrey on 5 February to visit Claire, 26. Neither was looking for a relationship, but both were surprised by the strength of their feelings for each other. Ever since then the happy couple have barely been apart – Bradden soon started a new job near by in Epsom. He proposed to her on Valentine's Day this year.

Plans for the couple's wedding began in earnest, and the couple were married on Saturday 19 August at the Leez Priory.

According to Claire the wedding was 'just perfect!', with very few mishaps, as everything



Claire and Bradden married less than a year after meeting in a Freeserve chat room

had been well-organised by her! Claire even had an itinerary printed up for all her guests – although the timings went slightly awry after problems in the Dartford tunnel held the wedding up for an hour while the bride and groom waited for some of their guests to arrive! However, the happy couple were determined not to let events spoil the proceedings, as Claire explains: 'Whilst we were waiting we took the opportunity to take some more photographs by the lake in the grounds of the Priory. We have some great shots of me by the lake with two beautiful swans who wandered over to see what was going on!'

It would seem that nothing could shake Claire, who admitted to feeling no last minute nerves at all until the wedding music started up. 'I suddenly noticed that my bouquet was shaking!' she says. However, both were delighted with their choice of venue. 'Everyone commented on how beautiful it was,' says Claire. 'We were married in the Tower and it felt so romantic.'

Claire and Bradden spent their honeymoon in Bangkok, Australia and Singapore. It was Bradden's 30th birthday whilst the couple were in Australia, and Claire organised a surprise dinner while cruising around Sydney harbour. They also went to the Sydney Opera House to see a performance of *Don Giovanni*, which, according to Claire, was out of this world.

Claire describes their meeting as 'a fairy tale come true', and admits that the whole thing has barely sunk in yet. 'I was talking to a friend whilst driving the other day and I caught a glimpse of my left hand. This time last year I wouldn't have believed that I could have one ring on my hand, let alone two!'

That loving feeling

The wedding between Claire and Bradden is not the only evidence that Freeserve can work magic. There's another happy couple whose lives have been changed forever, thanks to the UK's No. 1 for the Internet.

The story began when Freeserve member Stuart Dunlop recently logged onto the Freeserve site. Looking at the FSauctions page, he noticed that there was a competition to win the trip of a lifetime. So he entered and to his surprise, won the competition. He decided to take a trip on the Orient Express as his prize. But he didn't just have the trip itself in mind – he soon realised that he could make it an even more special day and propose to his partner Mary Scanlon whilst on the trip.

That's where the secrecy began. Mary knew nothing about the trip, so Stuart booked a day off work for her, which is where he takes up the story. 'She was meant to be going into work this morning, and I said I was going on a days' course. So we were about to get ready, and I said: "I've got a secret to tell you - I lied to you. I haven't got a course, I'm taking you out for a special day!"'

Mary still had no idea where they were going, however. After travelling to London from Essex, Mary finally worked out where they were going when the couple arrived at Victoria station, the station from where the Orient Express leaves.

Stuart and Mary celebrate

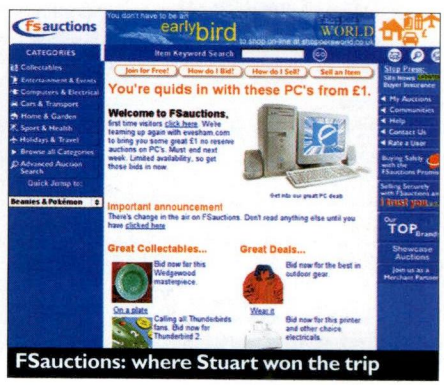
After settling into their luxurious seats to breakfast as the train made its way towards their destination of Brighton, Stuart decided that it was finally time to pop the question. 'Because so many people were asking what we were doing there, what we were celebrating, I decided to ask her.' Needless to say, Mary was delighted and said yes! 'It was a total surprise,' said Mary, 'I didn't know anything about it! But I'm on cloud nine – I'm very excited about everything.'

The couple spent the day out in Brighton before returning to the train station for their return journey. On the way back Stuart arranged a beautiful bunch of flowers for Mary to round off their trip. 'It was an excellent day,' said Stuart.

The pair first met about 13 months ago in Mary's local pub, the Royal Oak in South Ockendon, Essex. Stuart walked in and got talking to Mary, who was sat at the bar drinking with her friend. The couple have been together from then, and, says Stuart, 'it's been brilliant ever since!'

Stuart has been a member of Freeserve almost since the ISP began. 'I think it's very, very good. I've never had any problems with connections or things like that'. Which just goes to show: Freeserve changes more than the way you use the Internet – it can also change your life!

The happy couple after their day out on the world's most glamorous train



FSauctions: where Stuart won the trip

Photographs by Richard Saker & Steve at SC Studios

Freeserve
www.freeserve.com

That's the business

Whether you're already running your own company or have just come up with a great idea for one, Clearlybusiness.com, backed by Freeserve and Barclays, has something for you

If you have a great idea for a new business, there's no time like the present to get it started. And now it's even easier to start your new livelihood, thanks to a great new collaboration between Freeserve and Barclays Bank.

Clearlybusiness.com was created in order to help those who already have a small business or who are thinking of setting one up, by providing all the tools and information to run it successfully. The aim of the site is to remove the hassle and cut the cost of doing business. It does this by providing a range of services, all available in one handy place, that allows businesses to concentrate on their day-to-day affairs and worry less about other important, but time-consuming, jobs!

One of the main areas covered on the site is that of your business itself. Whether you currently have one, or just think that you might have a great idea for a new one, there's plenty of advice on offer. If you fall into the latter category, of inspired entrepreneur, then Clearlybusiness.com will help turn your dream into a reality! It's important to make your business work from the start – 470,000 new businesses start up annually, but one in five companies close within the first year due to lack of planning, poor financial control and red tape. To avoid the pitfalls you need the kind of independent, trustworthy information that Clearlybusiness.com can offer. Typical content available for those looking to start up includes information on company registration and registering trademarks, advice on legal issues such as contracts and dealing with firms, help with the type of office equipment that you'll need, and banking and financial advice from Barclays. The association of Freeserve and Barclays is unbeatable – both are leaders in their field, so you know you will get Internet knowledge combined with a long tradition of dealing with the small business market. It's important to know everything possible about your customers, so Clearlybusiness.com offers plenty of information on how to research your market. And once you've got your customers, you'll need to keep hold of them – so be sure to follow the essential advice on developing your skills, and tips and tricks on

sales, marketing and promotions!

And if you've already succeeded in getting your business off the ground, there's plenty of tips and information on making sure that it stays a success, from marketing your product to dealing with the VAT man and working solo.

So, you've got your business up and running, and you're following all the helpful advice on the site to keep it that way. What now? Well, approximately 750 million people have Internet access – and no matter what the size of your business, you can't afford to ignore that many potential customers! The Internet is unique in that it offers every business, no matter how

Get some help online for your business

small, the chance to compete on an equal footing with its larger competitors. So it's not a question of 'Shall I go on the Internet?', but instead 'What should I do with my Web site?'.

That's where Clearlybusiness.com can help once more. The site will help explain the Internet and all it can offer the 21st century business. And it will help you decide exactly on the Web presence that will suit you, whether it's an online advert, an online brochure or a full online shop – the panel below shows how this works. Clearlybusiness.com will also guide you through the whole process of setting up your page, from the initial idea right through to the time it hits the Internet! This includes providing you with the key tools to help develop your online presence, from registering your own domain name to registering with multiple search engines.

The whole ethos of Clearlybusiness.com is neatly summed up by Stephen Shelley, Managing Director. He says: 'We think small businesses have been neglected for too long. When people start their own businesses they do so because they want to be their own boss, bring an idea to life and to make money. They are often prevented from fulfilling their dreams by the time and energy required to overcome the day-to-day obstacles associated with running their business'.

So whether you already have your own business, or if you're looking to start one, be sure to visit Clearlybusiness.com for the best advice and information on how to make it a complete success!

clearlybusiness

Find out which Web solution could be the right one for your business by taking our simple, easy-to-use 30 second test

	A	B	C
Over what geography can your product or service be delivered?	Locally	Nationally	Globally
Where are the majority of your customers or potential customers based?	Locally	Nationally	Globally
What proportion of your customers are likely to use the Internet?	Low	Medium	High
What proportion are likely to buy on the Internet?	Low	Medium	High
What would you like customers to be able to find out on the Internet?	Your contact details	Information on your products and services	See and purchase your products online
What best describes your business offering?	Services	Products and services	Products

Mostly A's

Business Homepage... your online advert
The Business Homepage is the first step to getting online. The package fits any business wanting to advertise their company on the Internet. Clearlybusiness.com can help you design a free basic Web page.

Mostly B's

Business Web site... your online brochure
The Business Web site suits any business providing a service or wanting to display a product brochure. Clearlybusiness.com offers you a business Web site with approximately 30 pages, which is easy to set up and allows you to update information as your business grows. You can choose a 30-day trial.

Mostly C's

Internet Retail... your online shop
The Internet Retailer is the complete e-commerce solution exclusive for businesses selling goods directly to consumers. *Clearlybusiness.com* offers simple-to-use store building tools, with secure credit card processing and a presence on the Freeserve Marketplace, accessible to all regular Freeserve users. There is a 30-day trial for the store building tools.

Image Bank

freeserve
www.freeserve.com

Snow news is good news

Thinking of heading off to the slopes this winter? Then follow our guide to the cold stuff

In the good old days, life was simple – winter came, the snow fell, you went on holiday and skied using two wooden planks just under two metres long. End of story. Except this doesn't seem to happen these days. Anyone on the pistes last season would have been bombarded by snowboarders, snowbladers and telemarkers all fighting for their space in the snow...

Skiing

Alpine skiing is what the majority knows and loves. The skis are relatively rigid, as are the bindings used to attach your foot to the ski. Designed for descending steep mountains, Alpine ski equipment has evolved beyond recognition over recent years with a vast amount of designs to optimise performance.

Telemark skiing is something of a crossover discipline, using sturdy Alpine skis with elements of the free-heel skiing technique of Nordic skiers. Telemarking, which originated in the Telemark region of Norway, has seen a huge revival in recent years. Stylish, but fiendishly difficult, imagine descending a steep slope with a binding that is locked at the toe alone... pure face plant territory!

Snowboarding

Today's snowboarder has a whole host of designs of board and styles of riding to choose from. In the simplest terms, riding styles fall into one of two categories, either freestyling or freeriding. Freestylers are the go-anywhere-and-do-anything of the snowboard scene, riding both forwards and backwards, in the air or on the ground. If you see yourself spending most of your time on the ground, riding a variety of terrains, then freeriding is more likely to be your cup of tea. Whatever your style, the big advantage of snowboarding over skiing is that within a couple of days you should have mastered the basics.

Snowblades

These are the latest sensation to hit the slopes, appearing a few seasons ago. Coming under a plethora of names that include snowblades, skiblades and skiboards, these mini skis measure between 60cm and 1m with twin tips for the ultimate in manoeuvrability. Reputably easier to master than traditional skis and capable of skiing forwards and backwards, carving turns, or flying through the snowboard park, snowblades are the ultimate (grown-up) kids toy.

Whatever discipline you choose, it's best to book a lesson with a qualified instructor. It's the quickest way to learn, and will save you some of the initial bruises and get you moving along the right lines. Similarly, spending a few hours on your local dry ski slope will bump-start your technique and get unused muscles working once again. Once ready and primed, head for the snow and enjoy.

Ski with Freeserve

If you've read our guide and you're keen to get off to the pistes, then you need look no further than Freeserve for all you're going to want before you go. Simply take a look at the Freeserve Travel channel (*www.freeserve.com/travel*) to get yourself a bargain flight to the cold country of your choice, change your money to the local currency, organise that oh-so-important insurance, and get yourself somewhere to stay with the Freeserve hotel finder. Or there's even a 'Winter Fun' section if you want someone to organise the whole thing for you!

Become an expert on the slopes with Freeserve

USA v Europe

Can't decide whether to head for the USA or Europe on a ski holiday?

If organized piste queues, well-groomed trails and a guaranteed English-speaking instructor is your thing, head west to the USA. But if you seek skiing above the treeline, a multi-cultural experience and a variety of on-mountain dining, then go east to Europe.

Here's what each region has to offer.

USA

Snow conditions

Snow throughout the States is almost guaranteed, even if it is manmade. In the eastern states of New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine and New York, skiing can be icy and temperatures are often well below freezing. Western states such as Colorado, Wyoming and especially Utah have the 'champagne' powder that die-hard skiers dream of at night. Go too far west, such as California and Washington, and you may wind up with the dreaded Sierra Cement, the wet sticky stuff that is difficult to plough through.

Slope conditions

There are many well-groomed trails in the States which, depending on your preference, could be an advantage or disadvantage. Often a potential powder paradise can turn to corduroy. At least five or six runs are available at the top of each chairlift allowing for more room on the slopes. There are designated family and slow zones, ideal for beginners or those wanting to get back into the groove on their first day of the season. Don't look for skiing into the evening hours, though. Most lifts close at 4 or 4.30pm. Some resorts, however, such as Keystone, Colorado have designated night skiing. While in Europe, the lifts are open until 6pm in the spring when the daylight hours are that much longer.

Dining

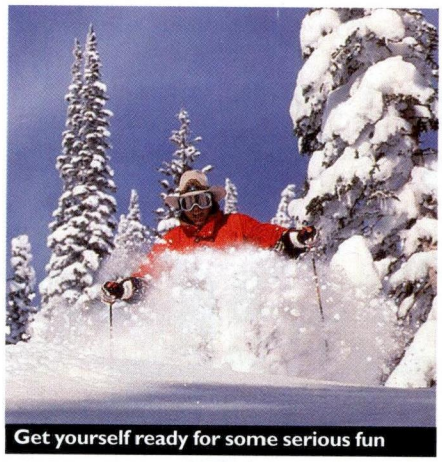
On-mountain dining can be bland and often consists of the predictable burger, chips, pizza and the occasional baked potato. In addition, the larger resorts have a monopoly on dining facilities, so your best bet is in the town below. On the plus side for non-smokers, most facilities are smoke free so you can enjoy healthy air in the pristine alpine environment.

Safety

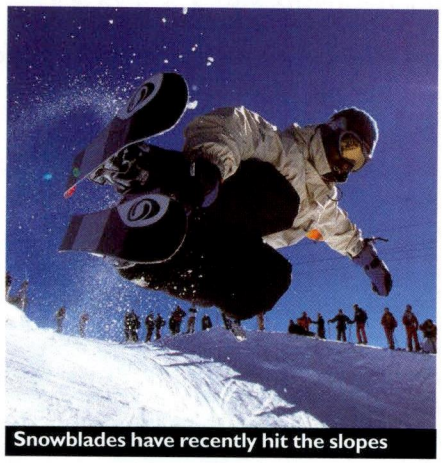
The avalanche safety record in the States remains hard to beat, and resort ski patrols have extremely high standards, a fact that reckless skiers and boarders will rapidly discover when they have their passes pulled for the duration of their holiday.

Ski Schools

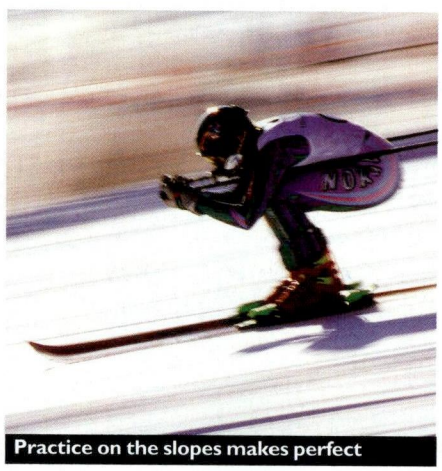
You'll find English-speaking instructors here with high qualifications. However, as there is only one ski school per resort, owned by the resort, prices can be high and there is no room for negotiation.



Get yourself ready for some serious fun



Snowblades have recently hit the slopes



Practice on the slopes makes perfect

Europe

Snow conditions

A good snow year in Europe is impossible to top. However, unless you wait until the last minute to book your trip, you're in for a bit of a gamble. Typically the resorts with the most snow in Europe are the highest one such as Tignes and Val Thorens in France, Hintertux in Austria and Zermatt in Switzerland.

Slope conditions

Getting to the top of the mountain in Europe can be as exhausting as skiing down it. Queues are on a free-for-all basis, so sharpen your elbows, smile and get to it! In addition there are a lot of t-bars and poma lifts to deal with, as opposed to the high-speed quads found Stateside. However, once you've made it to the top, it's a long way down. Most ski runs in Europe are decidedly longer than those in the States, so enjoy the ride. A treat awaiting skiers in certain European resorts is the option of excursions into neighbouring countries. For example you can ski from Switzerland to Italy (Zermatt/Cervina), Switzerland to France (Morgins/Avoriaz) or France to Italy (La Rosiere/La Thuile) to name but a few. Be sure to take your passport with you if you are going country hopping, since making it back to the country of origin after the lifts close without it will leave you with a lot of explaining to do!

Dining

On-mountain dining can be as distinctive as the country you are based in. Turn just about any corner in Zermatt and you will find a friendly, family-owned restaurant. If one menu doesn't appeal to you, keep on cruising and you are sure to find something you'll like around the next bend. Lunches in the Alps are long and leisurely and best spent with a glass of wine or two.

Safety

While avalanche safety has improved over the years, Europe is still not as safety conscious as the States. Be sure to check the conditions before you venture onto untracked pistes. There are still tens of avalanche deaths each season in Europe, while in-bounds avalanche deaths are virtually unheard of in the States.

Ski Schools

Some European resorts such as Val d'Isére, Méribel or Zermatt have a large proportion of English-speaking instructors. There are sometimes as many as seven ski schools in one resort, which allows for more competition.

'USA v Europe' by Laura Bell

Laura Bell is a freelance writer who spends winters in Vail, Colorado with her husband, Martin Bell, Britain's best-ever downhill racer. The couple spend the summer in London, dreaming of snow

For more details, see *www.freeserve.com/travel*

Freeserve Reader Offer

Keen to head off to the slopes and sample some snowbound fun? Simply book a ski holiday for you and five or more companions through TheFirstResort.com on the Freeserve Travel channel during the month of October, and you will receive a free Quicksilver Donut Polar fleece. Bask in your friends' praise for organising the ideal winter holiday, and luxuriate in some serious Polartec warmth. All for a single phone call to: 0870 055 6303

Offer of one fleece per group of six or more is available for all ski holidays booked in October 2000.

Empics; Steamboat ski resort; Ellis Brigham

Getting up to speed

Freeserve has just launched FreeservePlus, its ADSL service for home users.

Here's how to get a fast connection and some great content specifically designed for Broadband!

The Internet is a wonderful invention, and has changed the way that many of us conduct our lives forever. However, it still remains far from perfect and has some flaws, one of the most frustrating being its speed.

If you've ever sat for what seems like ages waiting for pages to download, you'll know exactly what this is like. Well, you'll be pleased to know that there is now an answer to this annoyance.

ADSL is fast becoming the way to connect to the Internet. Freeserve recognises this, and in September launched FreeservePlus home users' ADSL service. This new initiative followed hot on the heels of the FreeservePlus for businesses service, which was very well received.

But despite being a great way to connect to the Internet, ADSL is still a relatively unknown phenomenon, and lots of people are still unaware of it as an option open to them. So what is all the fuss about? Well, FreeservePlus is a Broadband service, which means that it is able to operate a lot faster than the standard modem that you are probably using at home already. As an illustration, most home modems operate at 56Kbps – that is, they transfer 56 kilobytes of information to your computer per second. FreeservePlus can transfer data at anything up to 2 Megabytes (2000 kilobytes) per second. To put it more simply, that's almost 40 times as fast as a standard 56k modem.

Broaden your horizons

So what does the term 'Broadband' mean? Basically, it's the opposite to 'Narrowband', which is what most home users currently rely on. The term covers both the ADSL Internet access itself and the content that can be experienced with the service. There are several different platforms that can be used for Broadband access, including ADSL, cable modem, wireless and satellite. And Broadband doesn't have to be limited to a PC – in the future Broadband will be accessible via home devices such as televisions and mobile phones.

As for advantages of using Broadband over Narrowband – there are many. FreeservePlus works on a 'flat-fee' basis, which basically means that it doesn't matter if you leave your connection on all the time – you won't be charged any more than that basic fee. As a result, you may well find that the way you use the Internet changes. In fact, a recent study has suggested that you could start spending up to three times as long on the Web! Broadband connections are, in general, at least ten times faster than standard dial-up connections. The

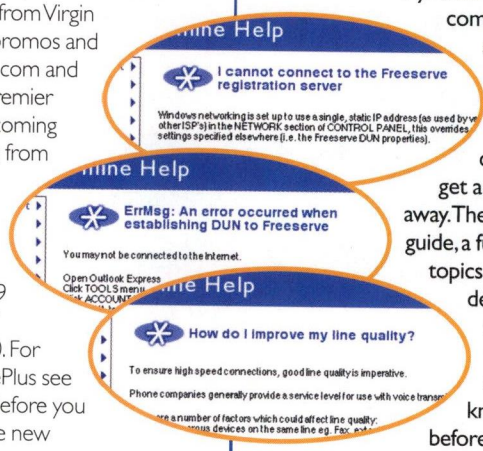
result of this is that Web pages will appear on your screen a lot faster, so you'll be able to get more done in your time online!

Some great content

There are many other advantages to FreeservePlus. A fast connection means video and audio from the Internet will be of better quality than with a dial-up connection. And if you use Narrowband, even basic software programmes can take a while to download. With Broadband the whole world of software becomes available to download online.

Freeserve is making the most of ADSL by offering those who choose to connect lots of unique content. This currently includes news from ITN; entertainment from Virgin records (including video promos and Web casts), peoplesound.com and Music Choice, Europe's premier digital audio service; and, coming soon, games and software from Gameplay.com.

So what does it cost for all this? FreeservePlus, for home use with a single PC, costs just £39.99 per month, with a one-off installation charge of £150. For more details on FreeservePlus see *www.freeserve.com/plus*. Before you know it you'll have a whole new outlook on the Internet!



Becoming faster

A number of Internet users were offered the chance to try out FreeservePlus before it launched. Here's what Ron Jonson had to say about the service. **Ron Jonson, a 31-year-old computer contractor from Willesden Green, London, has been a keen Internet user since discovering the Net five years ago. Ron has made great use of the benefits that FreeservePlus offers and is very impressed. 'It changes the way you use the Internet. For a start, the download times of pages are phenomenal – it's liberating not to have that waiting time any more. You really start to see the full benefits of the web with ADSL,' he continues. 'The nature of my job means that the Internet has always been a great research tool for me, but FreeservePlus really revolutionises the entertainment capabilities of the Internet.'**

Another great benefit for Ron is the lack of disruption to his normal phone and fax line service. 'I sometimes work from home and often need to talk to people whilst looking through a certain site. Before using FreeservePlus I used to email Web pages to colleagues and then call up later to discuss issues with them. Now I'm able to talk and surf the Internet at the same time.'

Online help

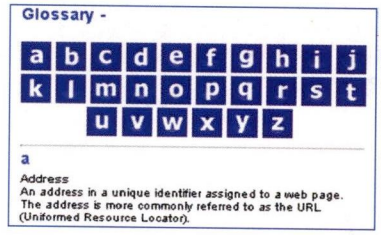
We've put together an awesome set of answers, for all the technical queries that you might have. It's available on our website – and it's free!

What are my options?

If you're new to the Net, Freeserve is committed to making it as easy as possible for you to get online. We've designed the help section on the Freeserve website so you can turn to Freeserve and get a straight answer, straight away. There's a complete content guide, a full alphabetical index of topics and a find function – all designed to take you straight to the answer you need. Separate sections deal with everything you need to know to avoid problems before set-up, and tell you what to expect as you begin to install the software from the CD-ROM onto your machine. It really is that simple!

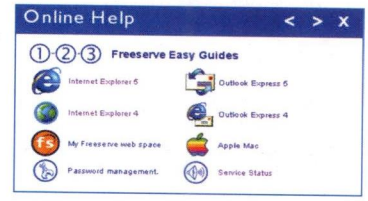
How does online help work?

It's easy! There are four main sources of information. Read through the descriptions below and you'll soon see which best suits the type of query you have. Then connect to Freeserve, visit the help section and get all your questions answered quickly.



The Glossary

If there's an Internet expression you don't understand, turn to our glossary first. It's more than likely to be there.



The Easy Guides

If there's an area of your Net use that is causing you difficulty, turn to our Easy Guides for a complete solution. You'll find answers sorted by subject.

Questions and Answers

If there's a specific question you need answered, turn to our Q&A section for rapid help. First select the general area from our drop-down menu, then a specific question. You may find your question has already been answered.

Contacts

If you still need help, you can email our support staff. They're the same people who staff our phone helpdesks, and they're trained to deal with your queries. Direct email addresses are listed on the contacts page. They'll be happy to help you!

How do I find answers on the CD?

Alternatively, there's also a fully comprehensive Help feature on the Freeserve start-up CD-ROM. When you put the CD in your machine you'll be given four options. The help button takes you to a comprehensive set of instructions to enable you to get online with Freeserve.

Phoneline help

Our experts are on call 24 hours a day

Using Freeserve's online help couldn't be simpler, but from time to time you might have a direct question for one of our experts. To help you get the most out of your connection, Freeserve's Technical Support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Make sure you've consulted our online help before you call, as you may find we've already answered your question. If not, our trained staff can provide you with instant answers in plain English on a range of Internet subjects. Calls cost 50p per minute.

PC Support 0906 2517517 Mac 0906 7234000

Image Bank

the *fastest* way yet to explore the *Internet*

Now Freeserve offers a new, high speed Internet service, ten times faster than an ordinary modem.
FreeservePlus gives you permanent connection. No waiting for dial-up, no waiting for sites and music downloads. Video is smoother, colours brighter, sound and vision enhanced. All for a competitively priced, fixed monthly cost from £39.99, with no other Internet call charges. This is the future of the Internet. Discover it today at www.freeserve.com/plus*

freeserve*plus*
www.freeserve.com

THE UK's No. 1 JUST GOT EVEN BETTER

For more information or to register online visit www.freeserve.com/plus or visit a PC WORLD THE COMPUTER SUPERSTORE at
Beckton, Brentford, Catford, Charlton, Croydon, Enfield, Fulham, London City, Staples Corner or Watford.

**Offer available to BT customers only. FreeservePlus is subject to a one-off installation fee from £150. All applications are subject to status, availability at the local exchange and Terms of Use available online. Minimum contract term is 12 months. Details correct at time of going to press.*

stepbystep

Which Webcam should you choose? Transform your desktop before your very eyes. And all our regular beginners' guides to email, newsgroups and chat

Your technical problems well sorted with our easy-to-follow guide to the Net

WHAT IS THE INTERNET?

The Internet is a huge global network of computers, with literally millions of machines connected together across the planet.

HOW DO I GET ON IT?

All you really need is a computer, a modem, an Internet Service Provider (ISP) and a telephone line.

WHAT CAN I DO THERE?

1 Surf the Worldwide Web.
2 Send someone an email.
3 Take part in a newsgroup discussion.
4 Make friends and get chatting with people from all over the world.

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136 HARDWARE Which Webcam?
140 SOFTWARE Reinvent the desktop
144 BROWSERS Explore all of the alternatives on offer
146 EMAIL How to send and receive
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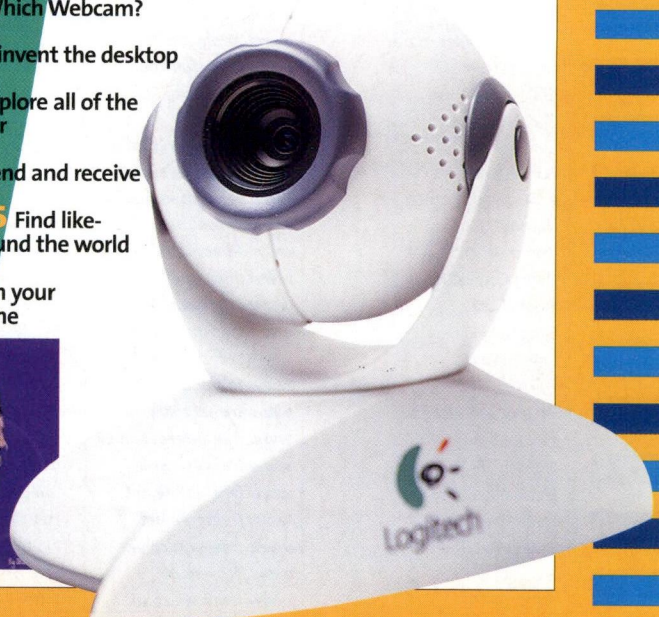
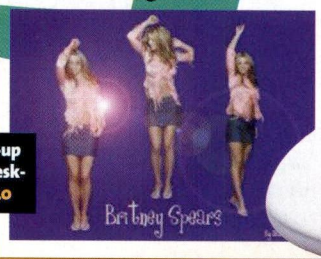
Webcams to watch p136



Spears-up your desktop p140



What Service Provider?

November 2000 Don't know your ISP from your elbow? Don't worry – our guide will help you find the best one to suit your needs

What is an ISP?

An Internet service provider, or ISP, is a company that connects you to the Internet. All you need do is exploit the provider's permanent Net connection by connecting to it.

Get the best ISP deal

Right now, literally hundreds of ISPs are vying for your business – which is great news for consumers. But to help you make a truly informed decision, we've tested the best service providers on the market.

Below, you'll find our ratings for the current crop of the best ISPs looking to connect you. There are several companies that are now offering completely free access – and that includes the price of the phone call that connects you to the Internet. LocalTel pioneered this service back in the spring of last year with the launch of Screaming.Net. Since then several companies have started to offer free calls to the Net at certain times of the day.

This new breed of ISP has started to change the landscape of Net access in the UK. That said, many of those who have launched free-access packages have struggled to cope with the huge demand and a number have been forced to withdraw their services. At the moment though, others are continuing to launch, undeterred (see ISP news, page 135). Do check that free does mean 'free' and that you're not going to be charged a technical support charge once you've signed up.

Call costs

Apart from the new breed of free services, nearly every ISP charges local call rates. For BT customers, this means 4p/min on weekdays between 8am-6pm; 1.5p/min during off-peak times, and 1p/min at the weekend. If you're not with BT, check with your phone company.

Speeding up

To say things are only going to get faster is an understatement. BT's ADSL (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line) is now being rolled out. It offers an 'always on', high-speed connection to the Net with data delivery speeds of 10-40 times a conventional modem. At the moment, most modems operate at 56kbps (kilobits per second) or less. For info, go to ***www.btopenworld.com.***

BEGINNER'S TIP

Put the phone number you use to dial up to the Internet on your BT Friends and Family list.

INTERMEDIATE TIP

Set up several free accounts. If for any reason you cannot connect to one provider, simply try another one. There's no limit to how many accounts you have.

ADVANCED TIP

Consider installing an extra phone line. It means you can have one for the phone and one for your modem, so you can use the Internet as much as you like.

INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS

ISP NAME	WEB ADDRESS	DESCRIPTION	TYPE OF SERVICE
AngliaNet Limited	***www.anglianet.co.uk***	Dial-up, web hosting and design for home and business users	Unlimited
AOL	***www.aol.co.uk***	A large ISP offering proprietary software to try to make connecting painless	Unlimited
Aviators Network	***www.aviators.net***	An ISP designed with aircraft-related content for the pilot and the enthusiast	Unlimited
BREATHE **FREE**	***www.breathe.co.uk***	Well-established free ISP. Easy-to-use site design	Unlimited
Btclick.com	***www.btclick.com***	The free Internet service from BT	Unlimited
BT Internet	***www.btinternet.com***	Another Internet arm of BT, offering a full access package	Unlimited
Bun **FREE**	***www.bun.com***	The free ISP offering of *The Sun* newspaper	Unlimited
Cable and Wireless Lite **FREE**	***www.cwcom.net***	Free Net access for CW customers	Unlimited
CALLNET **FREE**	***www.callnetuk.com***	Innovative free ISP offering enhanced Web-based services	Unlimited
CIX	***www.cix.co.uk***	The Compulink Information eXchange. Provides Internet conferencing accounts	Unlimited
ClaraNET Ltd	***www.clara.net***	Subscription-based ISP with a range of account options to suit any needs	Unlimited
Compuserve	***www.compuserve.com***	Free unlimited access for the first month	Unlimited
Connect Free **FREE**	***www.connectfree.net***	One of the very first free ISPs	Unlimited
CYBERphile Internet	***www.cyberphile.co.uk***	Business-oriented, Midlands-based provider. Specialists in leased lines, LANs, firewalls, ISDN etc	Unlimited
Dabsol **FREE**	***www.dabsol.net***	Free ISP with online sign-up help and comprehensive features	Unlimited
Demon Internet	***www.demon.net***	With e-commerce solutions and fax-to-email	Unlimited
Direct Connection	***www.dircon.net***	Home and business ISP offering global roaming among their services	Unlimited
Easynet Ltd	***www.easynet.net***	Subscription-based dial-up service. Winner of best European ISP at this year's ISPA awards	Unlimited
EidosNet **FREE**	***www.eidosnet.co.uk***	EidosNet is brought to you by Eidos, publishers of *Tomb Raider* and other great games	Unlimited
Enterprise plc	***www.enterprise.net***	Subscription-based ISP with a host of features including game and news servers	Unlimited
F9 Free **FREE**	***www.f9.net.uk***	Free ISP from previously subscription-only service Force 9	Unlimited
Firstnet Services Ltd	***www.firstnet.co.uk***	Business Internet solution provider	Unlimited
Free Internet **FREE**	***www.free-internet.co.uk***	Free access, free mail and Web space. Comprehensive service in a neat package	Unlimited
FREENET **FREE**	***www.freenet.co.uk***	More free access with a gaming bias. Online auto sign-up and newsgroups add to the interest	Unlimited
Free Online **FREE**	***www.free-online.net***	Straightforward free ISP offering news and email	Unlimited
Freeserve **FREE**	***www.freeserve.net***	Free provider from the Dixons Group of companies	Unlimited
Free to You **FREE**	***www.freezyou.co.uk***	No-frills free ISP with online sign-up	Unlimited
Freewire **FREE**	***www.freewire.net***	Free ISP with no sign-up requirements	Unlimited
Freezone **FREE**	***www.freezone.co.uk***	A free ISP offering the usual package in a smart format	Unlimited

ISPs explained Using our easy-to-follow guide

FREE CONNECTIONS
There are now many companies that will get you on to the Internet without charging a subscription fee – the only thing you pay for is the price of the phone call that connects you.

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES
Despite the plethora of free ISPs springing up, there are still many which charge a flat monthly fee. These generally offer free technical support; most free ISPs charge by the minute.

CONTENT PROVIDERS
Content providers also charge to get you online, but provide exclusive content to members, and a sense of 'community'.

How the tables work

Description
A brief description of the services offered by the ISP in question.

Type of service
Tells you whether there is any restriction on how often you can use the Internet.

Phone number
The number to ring if you want to sign up.

Email addresses
Some service providers give you only one email address, others provide as many as you want.

Content
Outlines whether the service provider in question provides its own content and whether it is exclusive to its users.

Macintosh support
Not all service providers offer software and technical support for Macs, preferring to concentrate on PCs – so be sure to check this column out if you're an Apple user.

Web space
If you are interested in designing your own Web page, most Internet Service Providers will give you space to store it on. 2Mb should be enough for most people's requirements.

Set-up fee
Some ISPs charge a fee to open an account.

Monthly charge
If you don't go with a free ISP, then you'll pay a set amount per month to be online.

Phone support charges
Technical support is great – as long as you're not having to pay a fortune to benefit from it. Find out how much free service providers charge per minute for calls to their technical support desks.

Telephone support hours
The hours when the technical support desk will be open to take your calls.

Our ISP testing is carried out by NetBasics, an independent company specialising in providing ISP information for consumers and businesses. NetBasics makes every effort to ensure that the data presented to you is correct. The publishers of *the Net* and NetBasics cannot be held liable for any damages caused by the publication of this data. Any Internet service provider that wishes to be included in the evaluation programme should contact eval@netbasics.com **For more information on NetBasics, visit its Web site at *www.netbasics.com*.**

PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS	CONTENT	MAC SUPPORT	WEB SPACE	SET-UP FEE	MONTHLY CHARGE	PHONE SUPPORT CHARGES	PHONE SUPPORT HOURS
01473 211922	1	None	Yes	5Mb	0	11.75	Mobile	9-5 M-F, 8-9 S-S
0800 3765432	7	Massive amount of content	Yes	35Mb	0	9.99	Free	8-10.30M-F 9-9.30S-S
0700 2842867	1	Flight planning and navigation	No	15Mb	0	11.75	Standard	9-9 7 days
0800 2983030	5	Entertainment, sport, shopping, finance etc	Yes	10Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
0800 800001	Unlimited	From Excite	No	0	0	0	50p per minute	8-12 Midnight
0800 800001	5	None	Yes	10Mb	0	9.99	Local	24/7
0845 3063636	5	Online dating, Bunshopping, *The Sun* online etc	Yes	25Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
0800 0923 001	5	Channels and account administration	No	20 Mb	0	0	National	24/7
020 73358300	5	Chat servers, channels, services, Web news	Yes	20Mb	0	0	Free	24/7
0845 3555050	Unlimited	None	Yes	30Mb	0	17.61	Local call	9-10 M-F, 12-6 S-S
0800 3582828	Unlimited	None	Yes	25Mb	0	8.99	Free	24/7
0990 000200	5	A large range of channels and a search engine	No	10Mb	0	16.95	National	8-12 Midnight
Sign up online	Unlimited	Channel-based content provided by Virgin	No	Unlimited	0	0	Unavailable	24/7
01543 454840	1	None	Yes	0.1Mb	0	11.74	Standard	8.30-6 M-F
Sign up online	Unlimited	None	No	Unlimited	0	0	Metered	24/7
0800 4589666	Unlimited	None	No	20Mb	0	11.75	Local	24/7
0800 0720000	Unlimited	User zone containing handy member services	Yes	20Mb	0	13.50	Local	9-9 7days
020 76814444	Unlimited	None	Yes	2Mb	0	11.99	Free	24/7
Sign up online	Unlimited	Free access to the Mplayer games network	No	20Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
01624 677666	Unlimited	None	Yes	5Mb	0	11.75	Local	9-10 M-F 10-4 S-S
0800 0737800	Unlimited	None	Yes	15Mb	0	0	National	7-11, 7 Days
0113 294 4224	Unlimited	Search engines and support	Yes	10Mb	0	12.50	Local	Business hours
Sign up online	1	Newsgroups and IE5 download	No	10Mb	0	0	Metered	24/7
08700 722622	Unlimited	Games links and independent status	Yes	20Mb	0	0	National rates	9-6 7 days
0870 7060504	5	None	Yes	Unlimited	0	0	Premium rate	24/7
0990 500049	Unlimited	Extensive channel-based content	Yes	15Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
Sign up online	Unlimited	Search engine page and technical support	No	10Mb	0	0	Available soon	n/a
Sign up online	Unlimited	None	No	15Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
0870 7441111	Unlimited	On-site search engine access	No	20Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7

INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS

ISP NAME	WEB ADDRESS	DESCRIPTION	TYPE OF SERVICE
Gateway 2000 **FREE**	**www.ukgateway.net**	An ISP service from the hardware retailers of the same name. Packaged with Gateway computers	Unlimited
Go Free **FREE**	**www.gofree.co.uk**	Free ISP offering online sign-up, complete with helpline	Unlimited
IC24 **FREE**	**www.ic24.net**	The free ISP service of Mirror Group Newspapers	Unlimited
LineOne **FREE**	**www.lineone.net**	BT's formerly paid-for home-user Internet service is now free	Unlimited
London Web Comm Ltd	**www.londonweb.net**	Useful London Local Directory will help you find everything from a plumber to an accountant	Unlimited
Netcom	**www.netcom.net.uk**	A comprehensive range of services to the home and business user	Unlimited
Nildram	**www.nildram.net**	Subscription-based ISP with a Low User option	Unlimited
OrbitalNet	**www.orbitalnet.co.uk**	Subscription-based ISP with a range of account options to suit any needs	Unlimited
Paradise Internet Network Service	**www.pins.co.uk**	Paradise Internet is a subscription provider which also authors software	Unlimited
Powergen Surf & Save **FREE**	**www.pgen.net**	Powergen's own ISP earns you points off your electricity bill	Unlimited
Screaming.net **FREE**	**www.screaming.net**	The pioneer of the free access/free phone call model	Unlimited
Smartone **FREE**	**www.smartone.co.uk**	Content-based service offering free dial-ups and plenty of rewards	Unlimited
Sniff Out **FREE**	**www.sniffout.net**	Free ISP with online sign-up help and comprehensive features	Unlimited
Sonnet Internet Ltd	**www.sonnet.co.uk**	Packages and solutions for the private and business user	Unlimited
This is it! **FREE**	**www.thisisit.co.uk**	End-user targeted free ISP	Unlimited
UK Online Ltd **FREE**	**www.ukonline.co.uk**	A family-friendly free ISP with plenty of shareware and gaming software. Sign up online	Unlimited
UUNet	**www.uk.uu.net**	Wide range of business solutions and PipexDial for single/multi-user accounts	Unlimited
Virgin Net **FREE**	**www.virgin.net**	The long-standing ISP now offering a free Internet access service	Unlimited
Which? Online	**www.which.net**	A free ISP from the eponymous consumer affairs magazine	Unlimited
Wireplay Internet **FREE**	**www.wireplay.com**	Wireplay is an online games network offering access to Intranet-based fast games servers	Unlimited
X-Stream Network **FREE**	**www.x-stream.com**	Offers enhanced member services, such as occasional free phone calls to the Net	Unlimited

Network performance

November 2000

Independent testing carried out by NetBasics – contact eval@netbasics.com

We test the best ISPs in the country for the reliability and speed of their connection. The tests are conducted in three areas and a star rating is given indicative of their performance. The three areas of testing are:

VARIATION IN MODEM SPEED

This is a gauge to measure whether you get a constant speed once a modem connects to an ISP. ISPs should offer a constant speed and we measure any variation. Each ISP starts with 100 percent and loses position the greater the variance in connection. This is achieved by comparison so that no ISP is favoured above others.

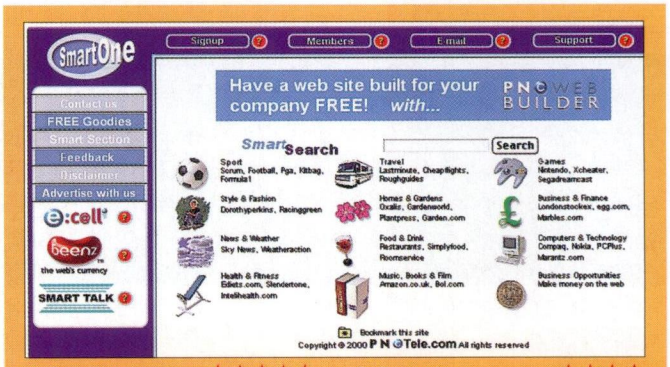
VARIATION IN TIME TO CONNECT

This section of the test measures the variation in how long it takes to get connected to your ISP. The reading is taken from the stage between clicking 'Connect' and then physically connecting.

AVAILABILITY

There's nothing more frustrating than dialling your ISP and finding you can't actually get through and on to the Internet. This area measures how many times an ISP refuses to connect, either through the engaged tone, or if it does not respond correctly to modem signals. The results are combined into a single reading giving us a fair way to chart ISPs based on relevant aspects of their dial-in service.

The results shown in the chart (right) are based on a sample of 50 ISPs from ongoing tests.



1	Smartone	★★★★★	26	Freenet	★★★★
2	Powergen	★★★★★	27	Freeserve	★★★★
3	Netcom	★★★★★	28	Free to You	★★★★
4	UUNet	★★★★★	29	Paradise Internet	★★★★
5	Cyberphile	★★★★★	30	Dabsol	★★★★
6	AngliaNet	★★★★★	31	Bun	★★★★
7	Wireplay	★★★★★	32	Eidosnet	★★★★
8	Nildram	★★★★★	33	Easynet	★★★
9	BT Interent	★★★★★	34	Go Free	★★★
10	LineOne	★★★★★	35	Compuserve	★★★
11	Firstnet Services	★★★★★	36	Breathe	★★★
12	Enterprise	★★★★★	37	AOL	★★★
13	Aviators Network	★★★★★	38	Virgin Net	★★★
14	Direct Connection	★★★★★	39	UK Online	★★★
15	Callnet	★★★★★	40	ClaraNet	★★★
16	London Web	★★★★★	41	Screaming.net	★★★
17	Gateway 2000	★★★★★	42	The X-Stream Network	★★★
18	Sonnet Internet	★★★★★	43	Demon Interent	★★
19	Freewire	★★★★★	44	Which? Online	★★
20	Free Internet	★★★★★	45	Orbitalnet	★★
21	This is it!	★★★★★	46	CIX	★★
22	BT Click	★★★★	47	Cable and Wireless	★★
23	Free Online	★★★★	48	IC24	★★
24	Sniff Out	★★★★	49	Freezone	★★
25	F9 Free	★★★★	50	Connect Free	★★

what service provider?

PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS	CONTENT	MAC SUPPORT	WEB SPACE	SET-UP FEE	MONTHLY CHARGE	PHONE SUPPORT CHARGES	PHONE SUPPORT HOURS
At Gateway Stores	Unlimited	None	No	10Mb	0	0	Free	24/7
Sign up online	Unlimited	None	No	20Mb	0	0	Metered	24/7
0870 9090262	Unlimited	Channel based content with news, sport, weather	No	10Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
0800 111210	5	News, shopping, sport, community etc	Yes	10Mb	0	0	50p per minute	8-Midnight M-Sa
020 83494500	3	None	Yes	5Mb	17.63	14.68	Standard	9-9 M-Sa
0870 5668008	20	A business oriented portal site	Yes	25Mb	0	14.95	National	24/7
0800 0720460	Unlimited	Product and service information	Yes	25Mb	0	11.75	Local	8-9 (7 days)
01233 646505	5	None	Yes	5Mb	0	0	Local	Business hours
01256 414863	1	None	Yes	5Mb	17.63	9.40	National/email	11-7 M-F
0870 6060653	5	Channel-based content with searches. Extensive	Yes	10Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
Sign up at Tempo	Unlimited	Travel, entertainment, business, sport etc	No	10Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
08700 774411	1 unified	Original portal site containing many links	Yes	5Mb	0	0	Metered	9/6 M-F 10-5Sun
01884 742510	Unlimited	Channel based layout with news, sport etc	Yes	20Mb	0	0	National	24/7
020 78912000	Unlimited	None	Yes	5Mb	0	12.50	National	9-9 M-S
0906 9124000	Unlimited	None	No	20Mb	0	0	£1 per minute	24/7
01749 333333	1	None	Yes	Unlimited	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
08702 424220	12	None	No	50Mb	Call	Call	Call	9-8 M-F, 10-6 Sa
0500 558800	5	Several Virgin channels	Yes	10Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7
0645 830240	1	Online shopping and consumer affairs content	Yes	2Mb	11.75	14.75	Free	24/7
0845 757 7577	0	Games news, games chat, games add-ons	No	0	0	0	50p per minute	12pm-12 am, 7 days
0870 7306466	1	Chat, news, lifestyle, shopping, etc	No	20Mb	0	0	50p per minute	24/7

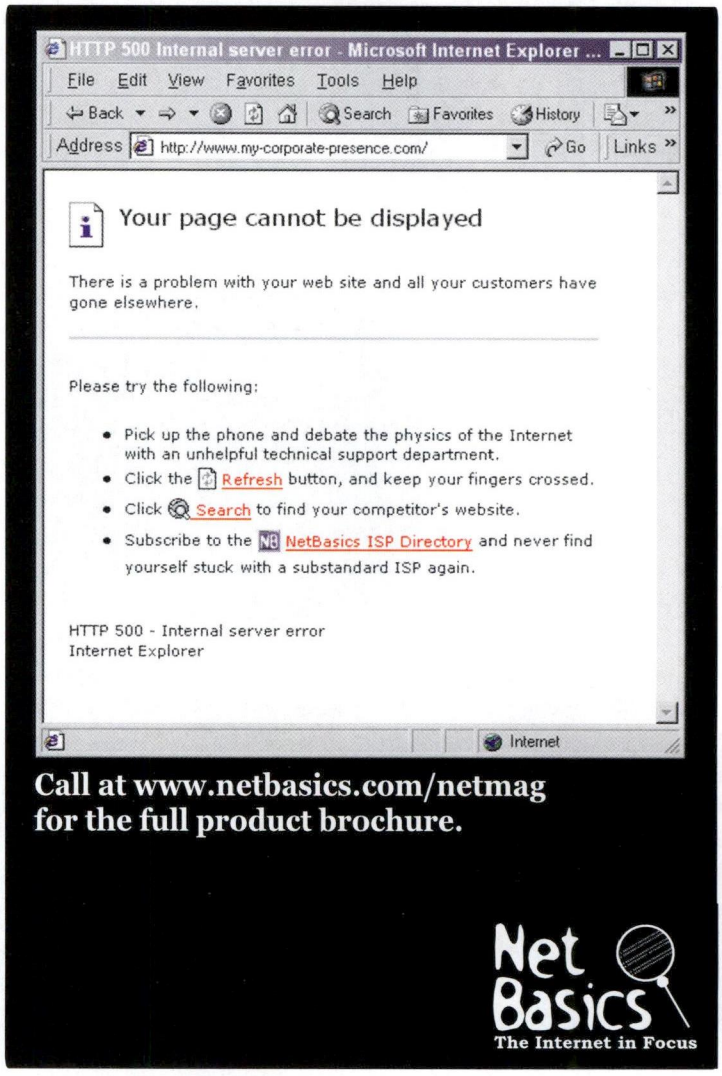
ISP NEWS IN BRIEF
All the service provider news you need

Free access at Altavista? Don't count on it!

After months of deliberations (or empty promises – depending on how you look at it), AltaVista suspended its offer of unmetered Internet access in August 2000. The company said that the changing dynamics of the Internet access market had not aided its progress, but also blamed BT, who continue to charge service providers by the minute rather than offering a flat rate. The 270,000 users who had already signed up are being offered two alternative promotions: 'FreeTime 20', which includes 20hrs/wk (off-peak) access for an annual payment of £60, or 'Net on Demand', where access is charged at 1p/min. *www.altavista.co.uk*

Own your ISP

Fancy a little business venture? With Totalise's new 'Ultimate Surf' option, subscribers willing to cough up £200 for 2 years Internet access will receive 100 hours/month surf time (which can be used during peak hours), plus their own stake in the company. Partnership comes in the form of £400 worth of shares, which are received one month after registration, and an additional stake one year later. While this offer is limited to the first 100,000 subscribers, Totalise hopes to expand the service in the future. ***www.totalise.net***



Call at www.netbasics.com/netmag for the full product brochure.

Net Basics
The Internet in Focus

WHICH WEBCAM?

Choosing a Webcam is not rocket science. However, there's a lot of them about so to help you we've assembled eight of the current crop

The Webcam needs no introduction after the *Big Brother* phenomenon. And while they have a while to go before they make the 'essentials' list, their pricing and ease-of-use means that, these days, you might as well have one as not.

Typically, a Webcam sits on top of a computer, recording a series of digital snapshots, which are then fed back to the computer. As well as setting up your own digital surveillance system, applications include video conferencing or video chatting (for the more frivolous) and, increasingly, people are using it to collect small pieces of video which can then be attached and sent as an email.

The advent of the plug-and-play USB port means that it's never been easier to set a Webcam up and there's no reason why you shouldn't be up and running in 20 minutes.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

You don't need to pay more than £50-£60 for a really decent cam nowadays unless you want to get into broadcasting over the Internet in a big way. Even then, the Logitech Pro, at just over £100, should do you nicely.

For some of its products, such as the Quickcam Web, Logitech has set up a deal with Spotlife.com to give users an account to start broadcasting over the Web from their site. It might not be able to guarantee you an audience the size of *Big Brother*, but it's a start.

LOGITECH QUICKCAM WEB

PRICE: £52 ex VAT

A sort of consumer version of the QuickCam Pro, the QuickCam Web still offers plenty of functionality: it allows you to send video email, make video calls and broadcast over the Net, courtesy of Spotlife.com, and the DigitalRadar software lets you set up your own personal surveillance system. Like the Pro, it delivers 30 frames per second, but the video image capture resolution is less at 320 x 240 pixels. However, this will be sufficient for most home users and it is capable of 640 x 480 pixel still image capture. It features a built-in microphone and we liked the cute styling and neat privacy visor.

Software included: Video email, Web page builder, Webcam (which allows you to incorporate videos and stills), MGI PhotoSuite image editing, MGI video editing, Microsoft NetMeeting, Reality Fusion games and screensaver and Internet Explorer.

Ideal for: Home users who are going to make good use of a Webcam rather than leave it sitting there festering and, at £52, it represents a great buy. The Spotlife.com deal is an added bonus.

www.logitech.com

3COM HOME CONNECT DIGITAL WEBCAM PRICE: £80 ex VAT

As simple to use as it is in appearance and 3Com receive a gold star for its fold-out installation instructions. Its slim build means it's also perfect as a laptop peripheral. It has an enhanced resolution of 1280 x 960 (using software to bump it up), while true resolutions range from 640 x 480 down to 128 x 96 (capturing 60 frames per second at the 160 x 120 pixel resolution). It's been dubbed the Palm organiser of the Webcam world – which could well turn out to be true.
Software included: PictureWorks Live, PictureWorks Net card, Microsoft Netmeeting, Webcam, RealNetworks G2 Player.
Ideal for: Home and business users; combines top picture quality with ease of use.
www.3com.com

INTEL PC CAMERA PRO PACK

PRICE: £61 ex VAT

Don't let the rather cheap exterior put you off. It's capable of every Webcam command – there's video-editing software to make your full-motion movie, you can make video phone calls, build a home page and play motion-based camera games. You can also import video from your camcorder, which is useful. There's a handy privacy shutter and a tilt-swivel base.
Software included: Intel Create & Share, Intel Video Phone, Intel email Postcard, Intel Gallery, Intel Snapshot, Intel Scene Recorder, Reality Fusion games.
Ideal for: Professional, business and home users
www.intel.com

PHILIPS VESTA PRO PC CAMERA PRICE: £45 ex VAT

if you're a fan of those Alessi kitchen accessories, then they'll be only one Webcam for you – and it's this one. And there's no reason why not because, in terms of functionality, it will deliver for most home applications: video and snapshot editing, video chatting or conferencing, and video email. Resolution is 640 x 480 in 30 frames per second mode.
Software included: Smith Micro VideoLink Mail, Ulead PhotoExpress 2, Media Studio Pro, Microsoft NetMeeting.
Ideal for: Style-conscious home users.
www.philips.com

LOGITECH QUICKCAM EXPRESS

PRICE: £29 ex VAT

Incredibly easy-to-use and perfect if your cam aspirations don't extend to much more than quickly capturing stills and video and then emailing them. The frame rate is again 30 frames per second and resolution is 352 x 288 pixels. When *the net* office needed a cam in a hurry, we set this one up – it literally took minutes to install and use. And look at the price, you could almost buy it on a whim.

Software included: Image capture and video email, Microsoft NetMeeting, Internet Explorer.

Ideal for: Somebody who wants a Webcam up and running in minutes, and a practically zero learning curve.

www.logitech.com

D-LINK DU-C300 VIDEO CAMERA

PRICE: £69 ex VAT

Another USS Enterprise lookalike. Capable enough on most counts but, while you'll be creating digital videos and videochatting in no time at all, it's hard to find a unique selling point for this one. Also, it doesn't come with anything like the amount of bundled software that the others do.

Software included: SmithMicro VideoLink Mail.

Ideal for: People who like the look of the USS Enterprise, but you won't be going boldly with this one.

www.dlink.com

CREATIVE VIDEO BLASTER WEBCAM GO PLUS

PRICE: £95 ex VAT

Creative's inclusion of 8Mb of memory means that the Go Plus (there's always a clue in the name) can store over 150 snapshots and voice annotations, making it a Webcam/portable digital camera hybrid. Creative is a maker of professional production kit, however at £95 plus VAT this cam is still within reach of home users who want a bit more. There are two capture speeds: 30 frames a second at 352 x 288 pixels resolution and 15 frames at 640 x 480 (still images can be captured at 640 x 480). The bundled Pixaround Lite software lets you create 360° pictures. Nice styling, delightfully light as a portable camera and comes with a handy pouch carrying case.

Software included: Video Blaster Webcam Control, Monitor and Photo Editor, Pixaround Lite, Microsoft NetMeeting, Internet Explorer, Creative MediaRing Talk.

Ideal for: Professional users or home users who fancy a Webcam and digital camera in one.

www.creative.com

LOGITECH QUICKCAM PRO

PRICE: £102 ex VAT

The combined package of cam, with impressive 640 x 480 resolution (for still and video images) and handy tilt swivel base, microphone, video and image editing software, make this an excellent buy for a professional set-up. As with all the Logitech cams, the capable Digital Radar software allows you to set up a video surveillance system to make sure nobody nicks your chocolate Hobnobs while you're away, and it performs well on every other level. At around 50 quid less, though, most home users would probably go for the Quickcam Web.

Software included: Video email, Web page builder, Webcam, MGI PhotoSuite image editing, MGI video editing, Microsoft NetMeeting video calling, Reality Fusion games and screensaver.

Ideal for: Someone into broadcasting from their site.

www.logitech.com

YOU'RE NEVER TOO DULL FOR A WEBCAM

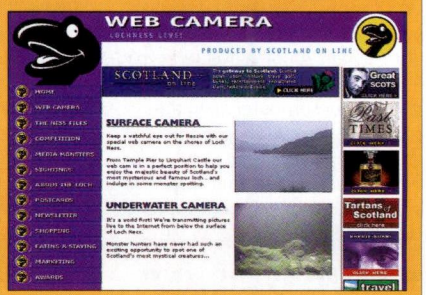
You've probably all heard the story by now. The Webcam was invented, allegedly, by an academic who wanted to keep a beady eye on his coffee pot when he wasn't there.

From these futile beginnings, the Webcam has grown into a product with a few serious applications, such as video-conferencing, but is still far more famous for exposing us to the weird and wonderful around the world.

You probably think that your own life is far too boring to have a camera broadcast it. Don't you believe it, that never stopped anyone. And anyway, what's dull to 99 percent of the population will be compulsive viewing to your Auntie Betty who emigrated to New Zealand and hasn't seen you for 10 years or more.

If you run a business, it may be of practical benefit to give a behind-the-scenes glimpse of what's going on. The homemade ice-cream makers Styles, for instance, are contemplating a Webcam on their tasty online shop site because it would prove that they are a bonafide cottage industry and not some huge factory, simply churning it out by the tub.

But back to the more fun side of Webcams. One of our favourites remains Scotland Online's Loch Ness cam (***www.lochness.scotland.net***), which entered a new dimension recently when it added an underwater cam to the site (see more details at *the net*'s Web site ***www.thenetnow.co.uk***). For the most part, it's deadly dull like a lot of Webcams, but just think how much you'd get for a digital snap of Nessie.



Chuck out your desktop chintz

Redecorate your PC today with the help of these sites

YOUR COMPUTER'S YOUR PARTNER. You've been together through thick and thin, work and play. But you're worried that the early spark of excitement you first felt gazing into its monitor has faded; you come home to the same old desktop, to be greeted by the same old tones. Let's face it, if your computer was your lover, it might have somebody else's fingers running over its keypad.

But never fear – help is at hand to give your computer an image makeover. You can choose a new theme, patterns, screensavers, icons, novelty cursors, and amusing event sounds. Eat your heart out Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen!

SCREENSAVERS AND DESKTOP PATTERNS

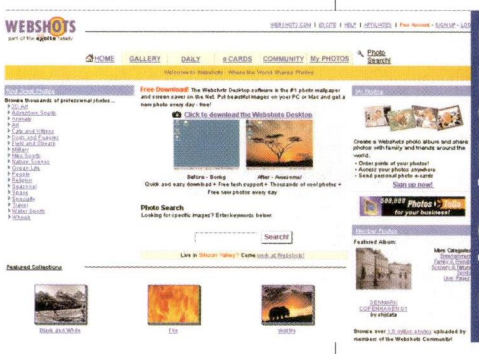
A screensaver is a program that displays either a completely black image or a changing image on a computer monitor to prevent a stationary image from 'burning' into the phosphor of the screen. Screensavers usually activate automatically after the computer has had no user input for a preset time.

Desktop patterns, also known as wallpaper, are simply the background image on your desktop. Some people are happy with a simple colour, others download dramatic scenic shots, mean machines or – horror! – pictures of their favourite pets or other fluffy creatures. Your computer should have come with a small variety of patterns, but there's thousands of images on the Web to download, and software that allows you to create your own wallpaper.

Webshots (***www.webshots.com***) is a site full of photo wallpaper and screensavers, which offers the Webshots Desktop Lite software for Macs at CNET.com (***download.cnet.com***), allowing you to place an image on your desktop automatically. Or you could try MacSourcery (***www.macsourcery. com***), which has a selection of software demos for both Mac and Windows systems that allow you to create screensavers from your own image, video, and sound files. And remember your favourite sites may well offer you wallpaper and screensavers relating to your pet subject, such as Kelly Brook's official site (see page 46) at ***www.kellybrookonline.com***.

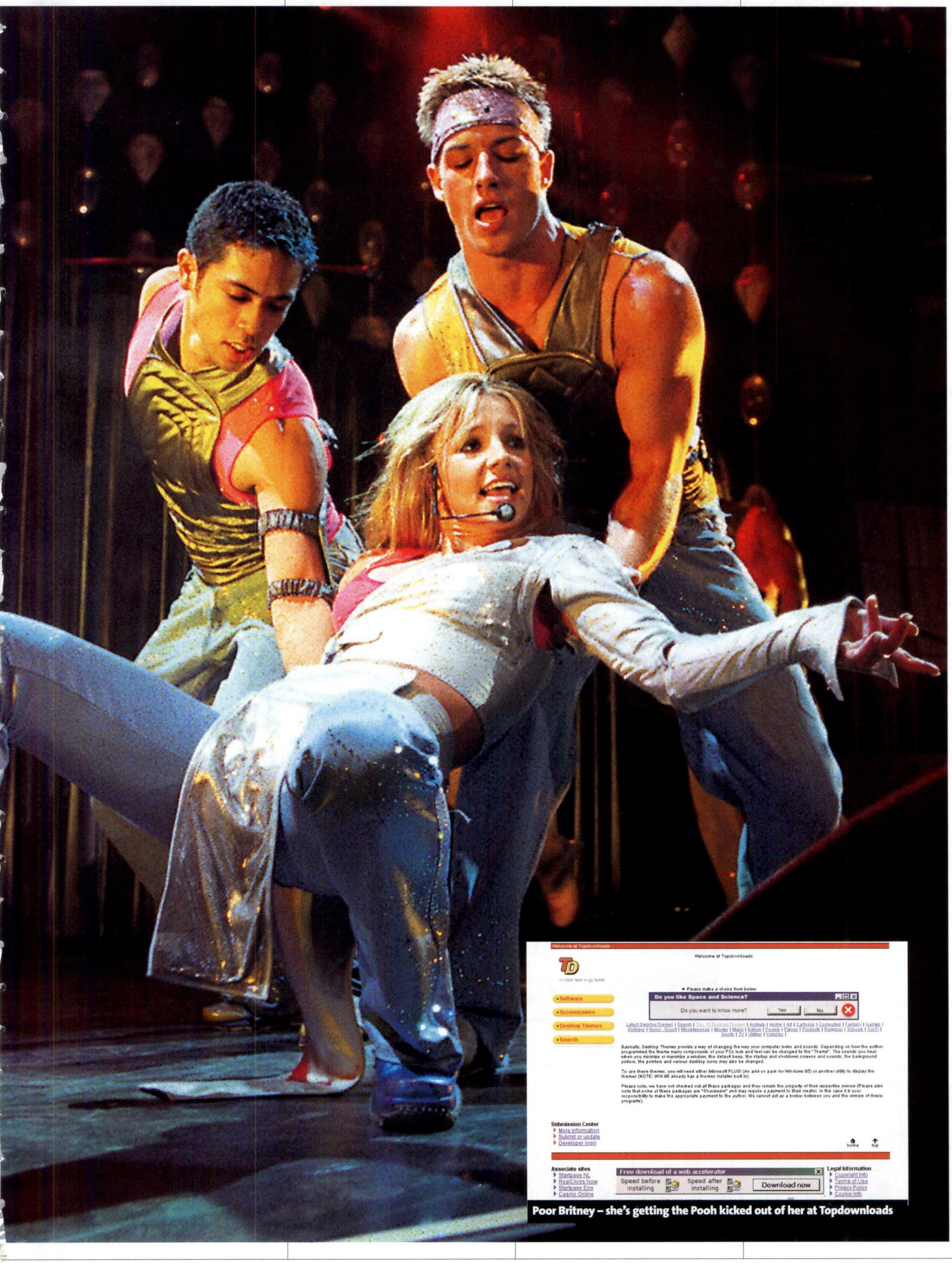
Those interested in exhibiting their own photos as screensavers should check out Custom Savers (***www.customsavers.com***), which offers a free trial of its Custom Screen Saver Wizard, or SaverGen (***www.savergen.com***), which also offers a PC demo version of its software. If, on the other hand, you're happy to use pictures already out there, try Webshots at ***www.webshots.com***, which also offers an e-card facility.

Screen Saver Heaven, at ***www.galttech.com/ssheaven.shtml*** (... ***/wallpaper.shtml*** for desktop patterns; ... ***/desktop.shtml*** for desktop themes), boasts more than 2,500 screensavers and also has a Newest Additions section



IF THE EARLY SPARK HAS FADED, IT'S TIME TO CHANGE THE WALLPAPER...

Britney's fortunes made her so, so lazy



Poor Britney – she's getting the Pooh kicked out of her at Topdownloads

to keep up with fashion. Many of the downloads on offer have a price tag, however, so they're not as good as freebies obviously. This is probably why FreeSaver. Com (***www.freesaver.com***) is so popular. The site is proud that it doesn't use shareware and there's no 'nag-messages' attached to the downloads. The screen savers are grouped in alphabetical order or in categories by subject/style.

One Stop, at ***www.1stoppictures.com***, ***www.1stopscreensavers.com*** and ***www.1stopwallpaper.com***, offers a wide choice of pics, screensavers, clip art and wallpaper in easy-to-use categories. And, while 4Anything at ***4screensavers.4anything. com*** concentrates on compiling a comprehensive list of sites offering screensavers and desktop patterns, ***4desktopthemes.4anything.com*** brings us handily to...

DESKTOP THEMES

Desktop themes allows you to change the way your computer looks and sounds. Depending on how the theme was programmed originally, many components of your PC's personality can be changed. The sounds you hear when you minimise or maximise a window, the default beep, the startup and shutdown screens and sounds, the picture, the pointers and various icons may all be changed.

There's another fine selection of free themes at Topdownloads (***topdownloads.subportal.com***). Winnie the Pooh was the week's top download when we looked in, beating Britney Spears into second place. Desktop Heaven (***www.desktopheaven.com***) also has a massive choice, complete with sub-sections and previews. While last – but definitely not least – is *the net*'s own ***thenetnow.co.uk***, which has desktop themes galore in its Fun Stuff section.

NOW WHAT?

Well, if you've picked out the face-lift for your electronic bundle of joy, you'll want to download it with the minimum of effort. Most themes need to be installed manually, but programs to make life easier are out there.

If you have Windows 98 or later, there's a built-in theme installer. If you have an earlier version, however, you'll need Microsoft Plus!, an add-on to Windows that will, amongst other things, allow you to easily install and manage desktop themes. Unsurprisingly, you have to pay for it. Critics have suggested that the great mammon was being greedy and should have included the software as part of Windows. Shame on them!

Microsoft did, however, post a fix to the 'themes.exe' program on its site because of the seemingly obligatory bugs, and rumour has it that a freebie version can be had from ***ftp://ftp.microsoft.com/Softlib/MSLFILES/themes.exe***.

There are plenty of alternatives that don't require Microsoft Plus, however. One such is Theme Installer (***www.lss.com.au/lss/windows/lsswindows.htm***), which will automatically install your themes for you. The software allows you to simply copy all the files to a temporary directory, click on the '.theme' file, select 'install theme' from the menu, and you're up and running. Other freeware out there can be downloaded from sites such as ***www.desktoparchitect.com*** and ***www.vclxx.com/xtm/xtheme_manager.htm***.

Kaleidoscope! (***www.kaleidoscope.net***) offers desktop themes for Mac users. The main difference, however, is that Kaleidoscope! concentrates on making available different MacOS interface designs with a simple theme (eg 'sea shell') rather than the decorations favoured by PC themes. Kaleidoscope! only offers thumbnail previews of the latest offerings from its vast library, so sometimes you don't know quite what you've got until it's been downloaded. Macthings (***www.macthings.net/themes***) is better on the previews, but has less choice.

The Appearance Archive, at ***www.appearancearchive.com*** is another site offering Mac schemes and also has a large selection of sound downloads ranging from US 'shock jock' Howard Stern to *Casablanca*.

DESKTOP ICONS

Now that you've turned your computer into the electronic equivalent of a tart's boudoir, you'll want to add those finishing touches. Which means exchanging that boring trashcan and dull folder/server/program icons into something fancier. You can even change your cursor!

Cursors were originally just there to let you know where you were pointing your mouse – now they're entertainment. CursorLand.com (***www.cursorland.com***) has a fine selection of animated cursors, some of which are free. Some are also intensely annoying: the Ralph Rabbit icon is 'a little gray rabbit. He points, waves, and you may even catch him eating a carrot. In no time at all, Ralph Rabbit will hop right into your heart'. We think not, especially as it inspired us to spend half an hour searching for a shotgun cursor!

Being in a slightly demonic mood, we were drawn to CursorHell at ***surf.to/cursorhell***, which had more than enough free cursors with a slightly off-the-wall theme. Less dark and more amusing cursors are at ***www.cursors.com/free.htm***.

For *South Park* fans, there's South Park Underground at ***members.aol.com/Obsiddia/index.html***. While the crème de la crème of icon choice is provided at ***www.yippee.net/html/win/desktopenhancements/icons.htm***, which has a truly sensational selection of free icons/cursors. The site also has icon/cursor creation and management software because, as always, there's those out there who aren't happy unless they can actually make the things themselves. You could also try the Cursor Maker at ***www.cursors.currantbun.com/main.htm*** or Icon Forge at ***www.cursorarts.com/ca_if.html***, which allow you to create or capture images to turn into your Windows cursors and icons.

If Mac users are feeling left out, The Iconfactory (***www.iconfactory.***

SOFTWARE SKINS

The icing on the cake is provided by software 'skins', a natty enhancement that allows you to change the appearance of many aspects of your computer desktop, whether you want WinAmp to look like a car stereo, or make a character in a game resemble you.

AOL, the world's largest Internet service provider, has teamed up with CNET to offer a variety of software downloads, including skins and other desktop enhancements, at *www.aolcom.cnet.com/downloads*. This extensive and easily searchable database is updated daily, so it's always worth a visit. The skins available are focused on MP3 players and Internet application, but there are a variety of others.

While most of the skins available at AfterDawn.com (*www.afterdawn.com/english/index.cfm*) are for WinAmp, it has the benefit over other sites because all downloads can be previewed. There are some excellent options, including Nokia phone skins – though these are only of visual benefit as their size can make them unpractical.

Infonet (*www.infonet.ee/arthemes/winamp/skins.htm*) is another WinAmp-focused skin site, giving you the option to change your desktop's appearance into many of the worlds most famous paintings. Again, previews are available before installing.

But enough of arty things, and onto the action with Action Games (*www.actiongames.fg.co.uk*). It's a slight variation on the majority of skin sites because, rather than merely changing the appearance of a program environment, you are able to alter characters in games. Available downloads include the ability to chase Bugs Bunny around in *Quake*. But, remember, there's always the option of importing your own images into a game as well, and there's a section of this site that will explain how.

YOUR DESKTOP DOESN'T HAVE TO LOOK LIKE YOU WORK IN A BANK...

By downloading any of these pieces of software, which are usually self-installing, you can radically alter the look of your desktop – it doesn't have to look like you work in a bank. While your screen can be transformed, you don't have to worry about learning how to operate new software; programs will run in exactly the same manner as they did before. It's just that everything will look and sound so much better. Suits you sir...

Show the world (or at least the office) that you have class with Infonet

WORDS: BRUCE POPE, SIMON CRISP; PICTURE: UASION

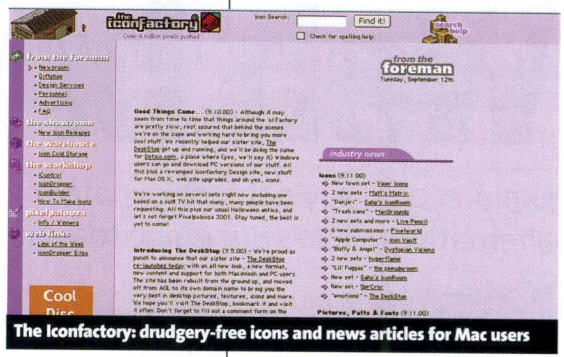
com) has an awesome collection of icons, plus a lot of other cool stuff, including news articles. Kineticon (***www.kineticcreations.com/kineticon/index.html***) has another large selection of icons, some free, some not. There's also a nifty download out there called Icon Tools (***www.riccisoft.com/icontools***) that allows you to stamp folders with tags, symbols, markers, labels, widgets and so on.

DESKTOP SOUNDS

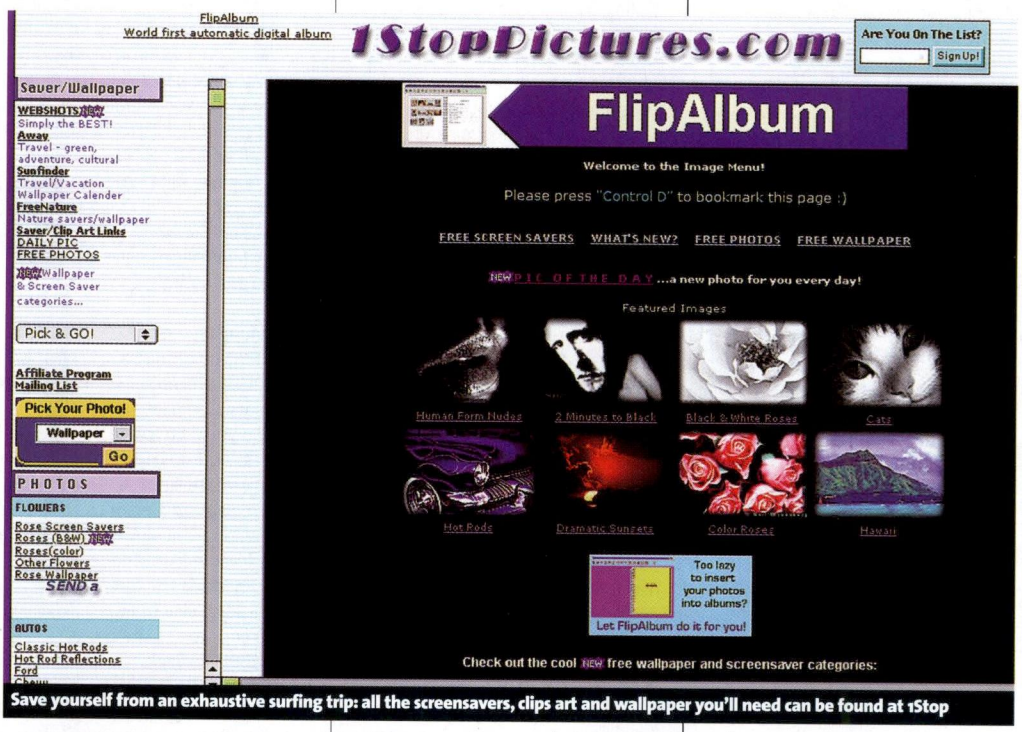
What are images without sound? If you're personalising your computer, you'll want something a bit more dramatic/amusing/abusive than 'quack' or 'beep' for error sounds. A good place to start is the Event Sounds page at ***www.moviesounds.com/events.html***, which offers shareware software to manage those .wav files and stuff. For PCs there's Sound Shuffler and Sound Event Editor, while Mac users are offered a smorgasbord of utilities.

And after you've installed the software, pick a sound. There's some great movie lines here, including the *Blues Brothers*' classic 'It's 106 miles to Chicago... '. The Daily .WAV, at ***www.dailywav.com***, has new offerings posted each day and two years' worth of archives. Sound America (***soundamerica.com***) is simply huge and also has a help section. Wave Events (***www.waveevents.com***) has its event sounds nicely catalogued and Clixsounds (***www.clixsounds.com/sounds/system.html***) has a fair selection of alert and startup/shutdown sounds for Macs. Music to your ears.

CursorLand.com: pretty icons and clean language



The Iconfactory: drudgery-free icons and news articles for Mac users



Save yourself from an exhaustive surfing trip: all the screensavers, clips art and wallpaper you'll need can be found at 1Stop

TOP TEN FOR DOWNLOADS

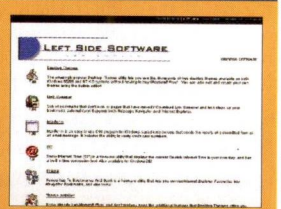
Our pick of the best sites to facelift your PC

SCREEN SAVER HEAVEN
www.galttech.com/ssheaven.shtml; .../wallpaper.shtml; .../desktop.shtml)
Personalisation heaven!

MACSOURCEREY
www.macsourcery.com
Downloadable Desktop software demos, for both MacOS and Windows

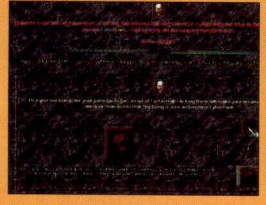
DESKTOP THEMES AT 4ANYTHING.COM
4desktopthemes.4anything.com Well-categorised site, including freebie section

DESKTOP HEAVEN
www.desktopheaven.com
Massive selection of themes, wallpaper, screen savers and tips

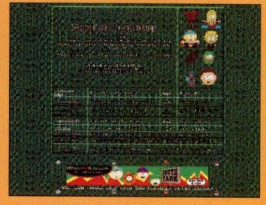


THEME INSTALLER
www.lss.com.au/lss/windows/lsswindows.htm
Software to install themes for Windows 95 or earlier

KALEIDOSCOPE
www.kaleidoscope.net
One-stop site to download a spanking new interface look for your Mac

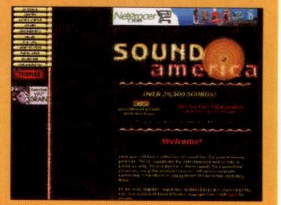


CURSORHELL
surf.to/cursorhell
A slightly disturbed collection of cursors and icons. Love 'em



SOUTH PARK UNDERGROUND
members.aol.com/Obsiddia/index.html Cursors and icons from the cartoon

YIPPE.NET
www.yippee.net/html/win/desktopenhancements/icons.htm Selection of free icon-related software



SOUND AMERICA
soundamerica.com
Huge collection of .wav files from cartoon, comedy and silver screen

Web browsers

Explorer and Navigator dominate the browser market but there are alternatives. Here's our guide to your window on the big wide Web

What do I use to explore the Web?

The software you use to look at pages on the Web is called a 'browser'. The most popular are Microsoft Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator. If you have a PC running Windows 95 or 98, you will almost certainly have Internet Explorer already installed. However, Navigator and other browsers such as Opera run in much the same way.

What are my options?

Statistically, Internet Explorer is the most popular browser on the planet with almost 80 percent of the market in the UK. Netscape Navigator is still its nearest rival but lags behind considerably.

With the facilities that the two offer, it's hardly surprising that they rule the roost. Internet Explorer 5.0 is the current leader of the Internet pack. It's packed – jam-packed, in fact – with features.

Netscape Navigator 4.08 represents the only serious competition to Internet Explorer. But it still can't reach the dizzying heights of IE – in fact it's slipped so much in popularity that Web site designers now often make sure their pages look right in IE alone.

You would've thought that with the market pretty much sewn up between the big two, no-one would be foolhardy enough to attempt to write a rival browser – but there are others. Opera, for example, is a tiny little thing at 1.5Mb (compared with Netscape Communicator's 10Mb+). It's fast, but it's let down by an ugly appearance. The Opera equivalent for Macs is iCab. It has many of the excellent features of Opera, but it looks and works even better.

If you want a real rebel browser, try Lynx. It's text only, so it cuts down on download times. For children (or adults who are kids at heart), there's Surf Monkey, which lets you blow up Web pages you don't like, or gloop green paint all over them.

Saving sites in Internet Explorer

Typing in the name of a Web site every time you want to visit it can be a pain – especially if it's a long and complex name. Fortunately, all Web browsers have a way of saving the locations of sites you like, so you can revisit them without needing to retype them. In Internet Explorer these saved site addresses are called Favourites, while Netscape Navigator calls them Bookmarks.

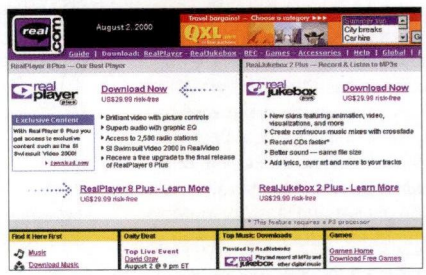
1 From the Favourites menu, choose 'Add to Favourite.' The keyboard shortcut for the move is Control D.

2 When asked whether you want to subscribe to the site, choose the 'No, just add this page to my Favourites' option. You'll see the title of the page in the 'Name' section of the site; if this is not descriptive enough for you, type a five- or six-word description of the site. Then hit OK.

3 You will now find that the site has been added to your Favourites menu. To visit the site, just click 'Favourites' and then go to the menu list and select it.

Supercharge your browser

Your basic Internet Explorer set-up comes with several 'plug-ins'. These are additional pieces of software which enable your browser to play, for example, multimedia effects. If you arrive at a site requiring a plug-in that you don't have, you'll be prompted to download and install it. The plug-ins you'll need to get the most from your browsing include: RealPlayer at ***www.real.com*** (bottom), which lets you watch videos or listen to music; Shockwave at ***www.shockwave.com*** for animation and sound; and Apple's QuickTime (below) at ***www.apple.com/quicktime/***, which plays video and sound.



Installing a plug-in

1 When you require a plug-in, a prompt appears. Click 'Get Plug-in' and you'll go to the plug-in's home page.

2 Click on the link where you can 'Get' or 'Download' the plug-in.

3 Explorer will put the plug-in inside the correct folder on your PC.

4 Go back to the site by pressing the Back button on the Explorer toolbar and enjoy it in its full glory.

Browser alternatives

Proof that there's more to browsing than Explorer or Netscape

BROWSER	RATING	FOR	AGAINST	DOWNLOAD FROM
MAC BROWSERS				
ICAB	★★★★	Fast. Gets rid of irritating ad banners	Could support more features	www.icab.de
HOTJAVA	★★	Pretty showcase for Java technology	Slow; somewhat unstable	java.sun.com/products/hotjava/3.0/
INTERNET EXPLORER	★★★★	State-of-the-art browsing on the Mac	Can be memory-hungry	www.microsoft.com/Mac/IE/
LYNX	★★★★	Blazingly fast at fact-finding	If it isn't text, Lynx isn't interested	www.lirmm.fr/~gutkneco/maclynx/
NETSCAPE NAVIGATOR	★★★	It's almost as good as IE...	Doesn't display pages as prettily as IE	www.netscape.com
PC BROWSERS				
AMAYA	★★	Great for those into Net standards...	...not for those who aren't	www.w3.org/Amaya/User/BinDist.html
ARACHNE	★★	It runs in DOS and is written by Czechs	A pain to set up	arachne.cz
CUSTOM BROWSER	★	Adds minimal extra customisation to IE	It's just IE with an ad in the top panel	www.custombrowser.com
HOTJAVA	★★	Pretty showcase for Java technology	Slow, though not as bad as on the Mac	java.sun.com/products/hotjava/3.0/
INTERNET EXPLORER	★★★★★	For the moment, the king of all browsers	Hard to fault, unless you really try	www.microsoft.com
LYNX	★★★★	The original text-only browser	If it isn't text, Lynx isn't interested	lynx.browser.org
MOSAIC	★★★	Good for developers	Feels old. Is old. Not updated since 1996	www.ncsa.uiuc.edu/SDG/Software/mosaic-w/
NEOPLANET	★★★★	Funky interface replacement for Explorer	Internet Explorer in new clothes	www.neoplanet.com
NETSCAPE NAVIGATOR	★★★★	Wide range of features for hardcore users	Doesn't display pages as prettily as IE	www.netscape.com
OPERA	★★★★	Faster than IE or Netscape	Looks absolutely horrible	www.opera.com
SURF MONKEY	★★★★★	Lots of fun – blowing up sites is great	Designed for smaller screens?	www.surfmonkey.com

*free 30-day trial version available

What all those browser buttons mean

Understanding the toolbar

BACK Clicking this button takes you back to the last page. Click it once and you'll go back one page, or hold to see the last 10

STOP If you decide that you don't want to view a page while it's loading, just hit Stop

HOME This button takes you to the page you viewed when you started your browser

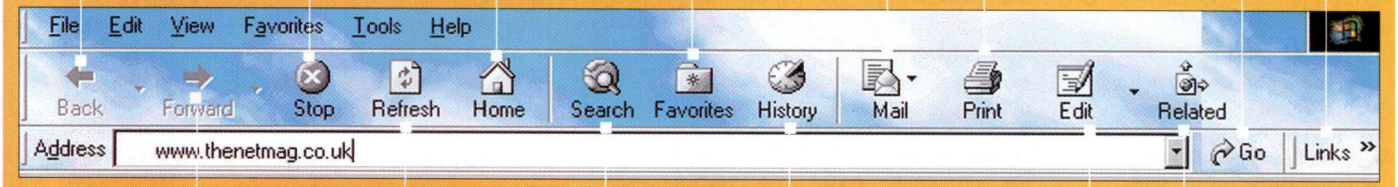
FAVOURITES Pop-up window containing a list of your Favourite sites – or you can view them from the menu

MAIL Opens your email program

PRINT Prints the page

GO When you've entered an address, hit Enter or click here to go to the site

LINKS A quick shortcut to some of your favourite sites, which you can add to



FORWARD If you've used the Back button to move back a page or two, the Forward button should take you back again

REFRESH This makes the browser redraw the page on the screen – useful if you have stopped a page from loading

SEARCH This button opens Internet Explorer's search options where you'll find short-cuts to finding what you want on the Internet

HISTORY Clicking this button produces a list of all the sites visited over the past few days or weeks – so if you found a really useful page two days ago but forgot to add it to your Favourites list, you can easily find it again by looking here

EDIT If you have a Web page editor, you can edit a Web page by clicking here

RELATED SITES Launches the Explorer 'Alexa' plug-in which provides extra search options

Viewing your browser

1 **TITLE BAR** Tells you the name of the site you're visiting and the program you're currently using

2 **MENU BAR** The range of options you can use while navigating the Internet

3 **IE LOGO** Contains a link to the IE home page, in case you're lost

4 **ADDRESS** The address of the site you're opening, including the http:// prefix

5 **GO BUTTON** Click to go to the address you've typed in (or hit the Return key)

6 **WEB SITE WINDOW** The whole page you're opening

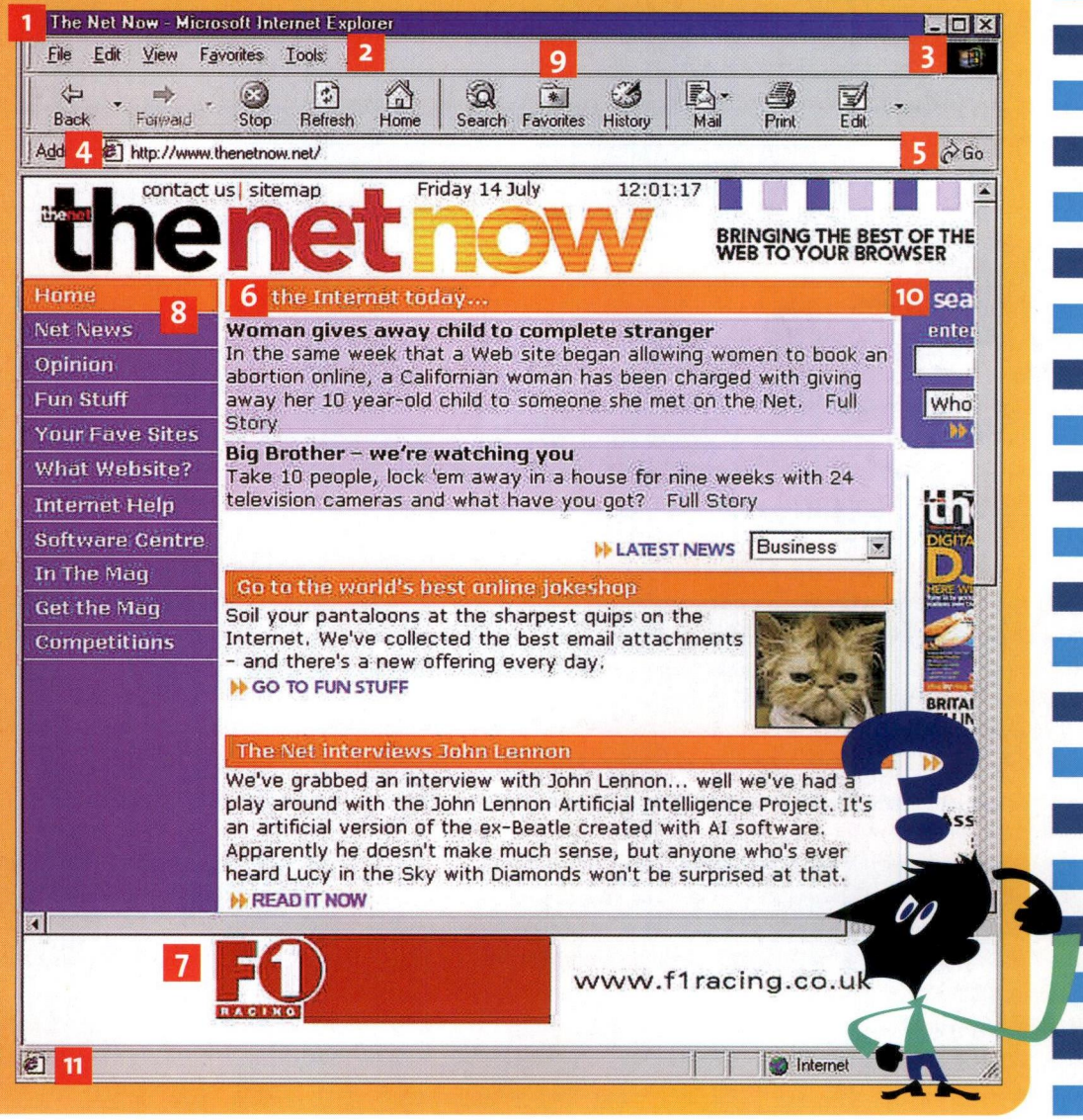
7 **BANNER ADVERTISEMENT** Click here to visit the service advertised in this small banner

8 **INDEX** What you'll find on the site. Click on an option to enter it

9 **FAVOURITES** Or Bookmarks in Netscape. This is where you can store the addresses of your most often visited Web sites

10 **SEARCH** Will find something specific on the site for you

11 **DOWNLOAD DATA** This space tells you what Explorer is doing – or which site it could open when your cursor passes over a link



Email

Still not sent that first email? Follow our guide to using Outlook Express

What is email?

Email is a way of sending messages around the Internet. While early programs could only handle plain text, most can now carry pictures and even video clips and sound.

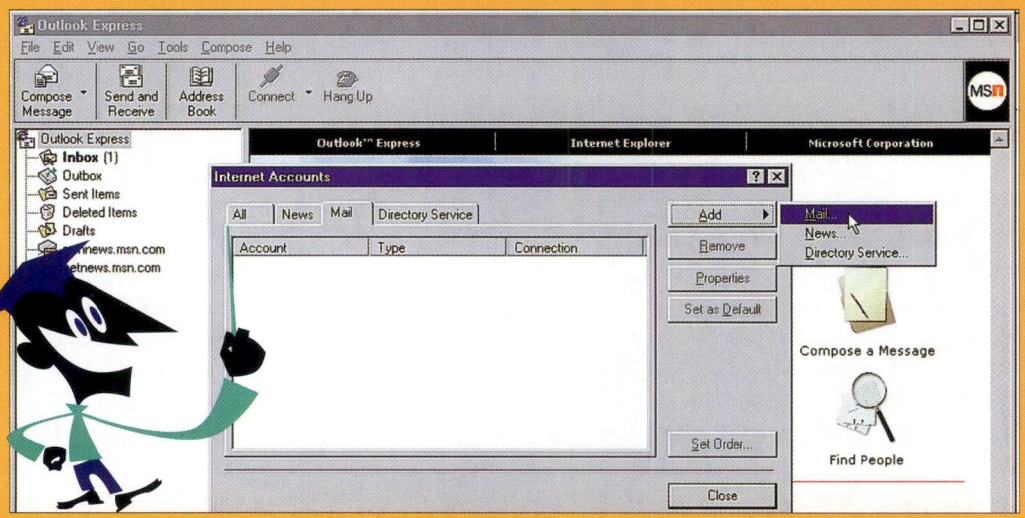
So why should I use it?

➤ It's a lot cheaper to email a friend than to phone them long distance.
➤ It's delivered almost instantly – there's no seven-day wait if you're emailing someone on the other side of the globe.
➤ You can keep in touch with family and friends, even while they're away on business or holidays – they can visit a cybercafé and check their mail from there.
➤ Many companies now rely on email as a means of communication because it's much faster and cheaper than ordinary or 'snail mail'.
➤ You can have information on your favourite subjects – whether it's fishing, the stock market, or a TV programme – delivered to your mailbox every day.

Okay, so how do I use it?

There are lots of email packages, but the one most widely used is Microsoft's Outlook Express. If you've bought a PC in the last two or three years, or you've downloaded Microsoft Internet Explorer for either Mac or PC, you'll already have Outlook Express installed. Our step-by-step guide shows you how to configure the program, create an email message, send it, and then read through the mail you've been sent.

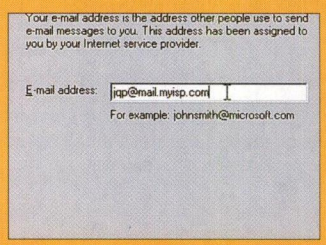
1 Getting started with Outlook Express



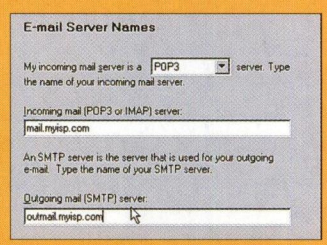
1 From the Start menu on your desktop, click Programs and then Outlook Express. If you are asked where you want it to store messages, select the pre-set or 'default' folder. The folder is kept in the Program Files folder on your hard drive.

2 Once Outlook Express has loaded, go to the Accounts box from the Tools menu, and click the Mail tab shown in the picture on the left. This will show you any mail accounts you already have set up, and allows you to create a new one. For the purposes of this exercise we are going to create a new email account. Next, click Add, and select Mail.

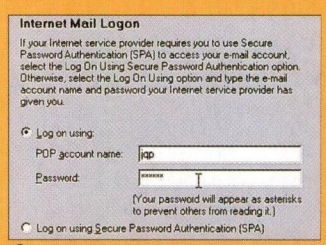
3 The Internet Connection Wizard will now guide you through the steps you need to take. First, enter your full name.



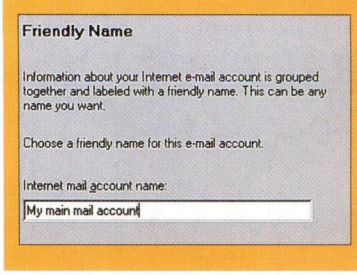
4 Type in your email address. This will have been given to you by your Internet service provider or ISP.



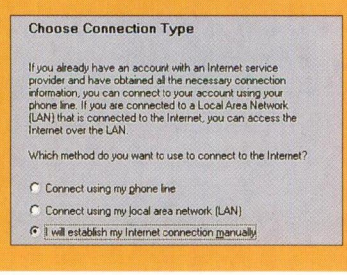
5 Enter the names of the email POP3/IMAP server in order to get incoming and outgoing mail. Call your ISP's helpline if you're unsure.



6 Type in your email address – just the part before the '@' sign – and your password. Again, your ISP should have given you these details.



7 Outlook Express asks for a 'friendly name' to give to your email account. We've called ours 'My main email account' for simplicity.



8 Outlook Express can automatically dial into your ISP for you, but it's probably best to connect manually. You can use Outlook offline, writing and managing your mail and then connect in order to send and receive messages. Choose the 'I will establish my Internet connection manually' option.

MORE EMAIL HELP AND ADVICE @ www.thenetnow.co.uk

- ★ Creating an email address book
- ★ Email etiquette
- ★ Filtering your email messages
- ★ Sending pictures and files via email

BEGINNER'S TIP

Add a 'signature' to your messages. A signature is like a calling card appended to the bottom of your email message. It might contain your email address, full name and phone number. To make one, go to the Tools menu in Outlook Express, choose Options and select Stationery and click on the Signature button. Type in the signature text you want to appear at the bottom of each message.

INTERMEDIATE TIP

Often, you'll want to pass a file to someone as part of your email message. This is known as 'attaching' the file, and is supported by most email packages. Remember that a large file will take longer to send. Compressing it using a shareware package like WinZip on the PC will shrink it, but the receiver the file will need a copy of the same program to re-expand it – so check before you send.

ADVANCED TIP

You can set up several different email accounts. Outlook Express will check each one for new mail when you go online. This is useful if you have separate work and personal email accounts. To add extra accounts, go to the Tools menu, select Options and click on New Account. Go through the 'Getting Started' steps again below, entering the new settings.

EMAIL OPTIONS If you don't want to use Outlook Express, try these alternatives for size

EUDORA LIGHT

www.eudora.com

A very popular, free email package. Includes lots of great features. Doesn't support reading news-groups, but copes happily with 'rich content email' – mail that includes sound, images and so on.

✔ **Lots of features**

✘ **None**

HOTMAIL

www.hotmail.com

A Web-based email program. Gives you a free email address, and can be accessed from any computer with a Web browser. Can also check email from a non-Web-based account.

✔ **Accessed from any computer**

✘ **You need to be online to read or compose mail**

EUDORA PRO 4.3

www.eudora.com

Commercial bigger brother to Eudora Light. Has all the features of Lite, but also allows you to check your mail from several different accounts easily.

✔ **Supports multiple mailboxes, spellchacker, email filtering**

✘ **It'll set you back nearly £30**

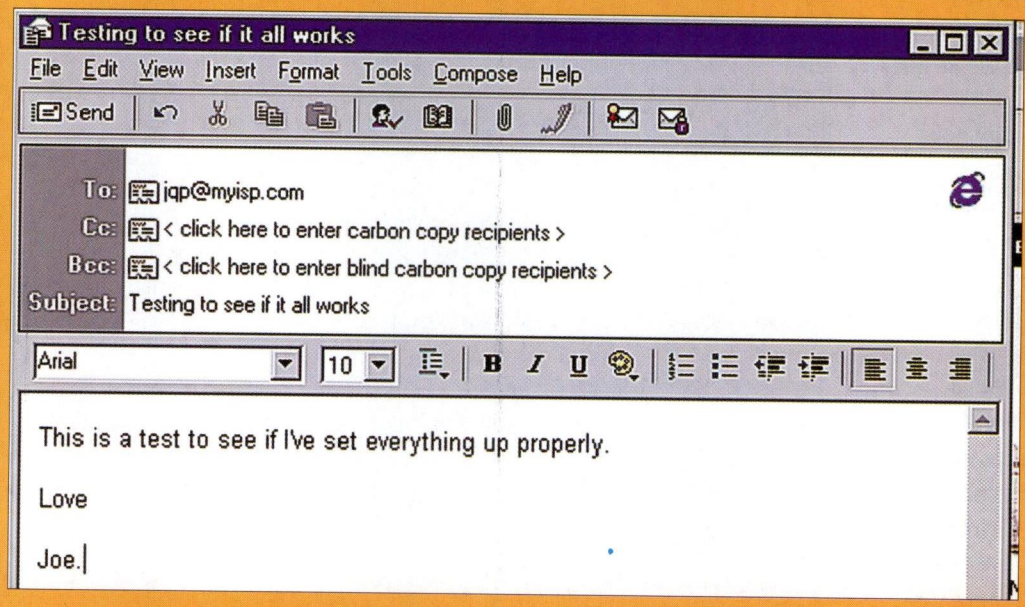
OUTLOOK 2000

www.microsoft.com Commercial bigger brother to Outlook Express. Includes an address book, to-do list and calendar, all of which link very elegantly in to the email section of the program.

✔ **Integrates well with address book, diary and scheduler**

✘ **It'll set you back around £125**

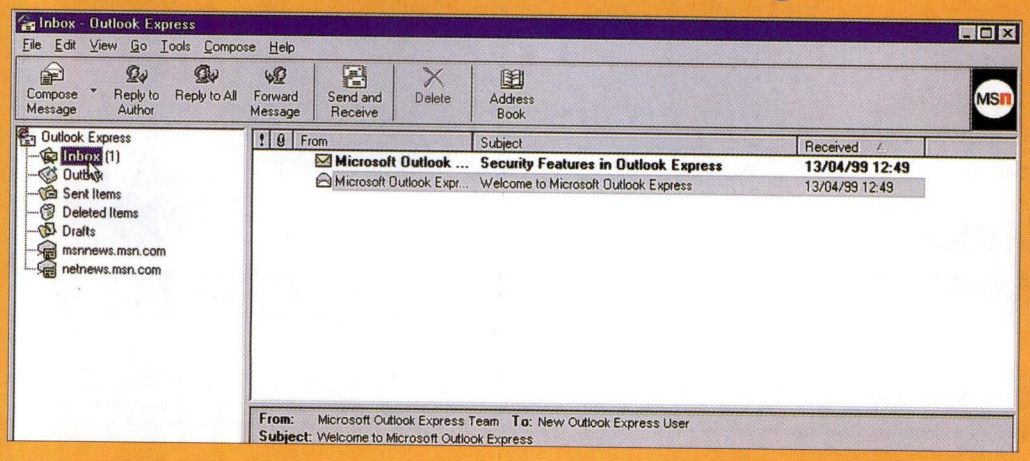
2 Composing your first email message



COMPOSING A MESSAGE

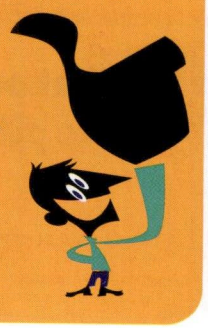
To create a message, click 'Compose Message'. If you click the small arrow just to the right, you will see that there are several pre-defined graphic message templates. But for now, just click on the button itself. Type your own email address in the 'To' field – you'll send an email to yourself to check that everything is working correctly. Enter a subject, for example 'Test Message', and in the body area just type a short message. From the File menu you can click Send to send your message now if you're online. Alternatively, if you're working offline click Send Later. This allows you to create more messages and have them ready for sending when you're ready to log on to the Net.

3 Sending, receiving & reading email



SENDING & RECEIVING MAIL

To send and receive mail, connect to the Net, then click the Send and Receive button. This will check for mail and download any new messages, at the same time sending any outgoing messages you have created. Once the program has stopped receiving mail, you can disconnect from the Net if you wish, to save phone costs. Click on In Box to the left of the screen to access the messages you have received. Click on the message to read its contents.



Be just like Joe!

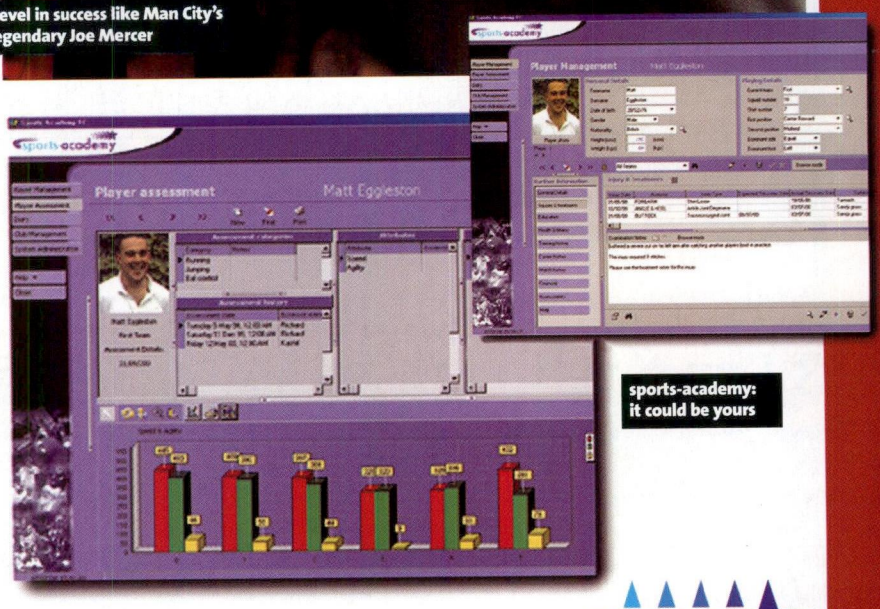
Win the chance to turn your amateur team into real professionals with sports-academy management software, worth £300

Do you manage or play in an amateur football team? Then sports-academy's management software will help lift your team to the Premier League. And we've got 20 copies to give away.

Sports-academy is a revolutionary new player management software system from e-comsport group plc, which has a proven track record in all aspects of football information and technology. Developed by leading IT analysts and consultants, in conjunction with experienced football professionals, sports-academy offers a unique, computer-based player registration and assessment package. Available for PCs only, it is used in the professional game and now amateur clubs will be able to improve the development of their players, in the same way as their Premier League counterparts.

All you have to do is answer the following question and send it, along with your name and address, to the net/sports-academy, 38-42 Hampton Road, Teddington, Middx TW11 0JE, by no later than 22 November. The first 20 entries drawn out of the hat with the correct answer will win the software.

Revel in success like Man City's legendary Joe Mercer



sports-academy: it could be yours

Q What position did Stuart Pearce play for England?

sports-academy

TERMS & CONDITIONS The closing date for entries is 22nd November 2000. Entrants must be resident in the UK. The prize winners will be chosen from all the correct entries received by 22nd November 2000. All prize winners will be notified within 2 weeks of the draw. No cash alternative of substitute prizes will be allowed. The competition organisers reserve the right to supply a prize of similar value and specification if the named prize is unavailable. The decision of the organisers is final and no correspondence will be entered into. Information on the winners of the competition will be available within 2 weeks of the published closing date and will be supplied upon receipt of a stamped self-addressed envelope.

MORE EMAIL HELP AND ADVICE @ www.thenetnow.co.uk

- ★ Sending your first message
- ★ Newsgroup etiquette
- ★ Members-only bulletin boards
- ★ Web forums

Newsgroups

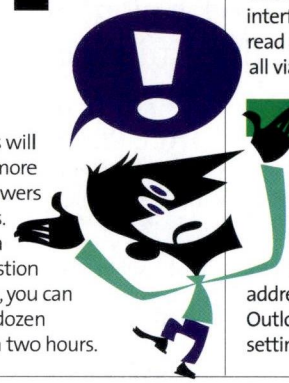
Whatever your fave rave, they'll be a newsgroup dedicated to it on the Internet. Here's how to join it

What is a newsgroup?

Newsgroups are one of the older services on the Internet. Each group is like a bulletin board – anyone can post messages to different newsgroups, and anyone can read the postings. There are tens of thousands of different newsgroup subjects available, so there will be one that matches your interests – whether you're looking for info on beekeeping or book-keeping, computers or comics, sewing or sailing.

Why should I use newsgroups?

Although the Web has plenty of information on most subjects, newsgroups will often have more detailed answers to questions. If you have a specific question on a subject, you can have half a dozen responses in two hours.



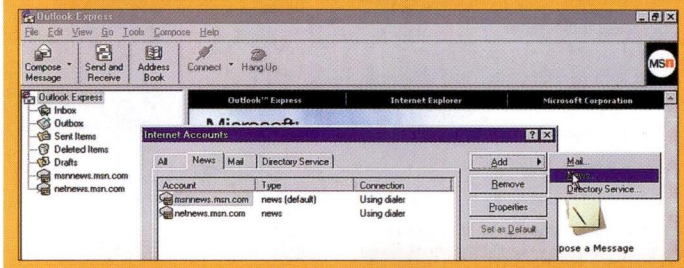
BEGINNER'S TIP

If you don't want to go to the bother of configuring Outlook Express or other newsgroup access software, visit DejaNews **www.deja.com** – a Web-based interface to newsgroups. You can read and send messages from here, all via your Web browser. Simple.

ADVANCED TIP

Your ISP will provide you with its own news server access. Mick's Place at ***web.ukonline.co.uk/mick.sz/*** has over 50 free access news server addresses. To add more servers to Outlook Express, go through the setting up steps outlined below.

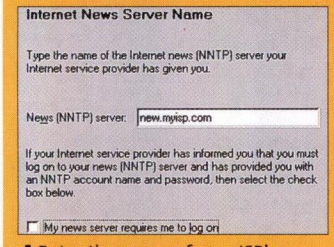
Accessing newsgroups using Outlook Express



1 Go to the Accounts entry in the Tools menu, click on the News tab to list your current news accounts (if any), hit Add and choose News.

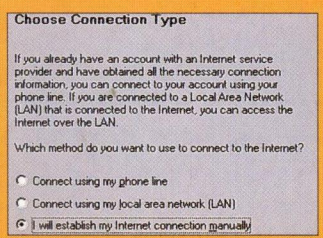
2 Type in your name. This will be displayed in any message you post to a newsgroup. Then hit Next.

3 Type in your email address. This will be displayed in any message you post. Then click Next.

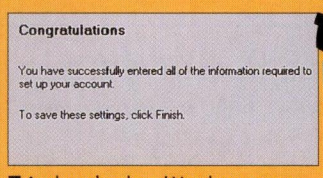


4 Enter the name of your ISP's server which should be given in your user documentation.

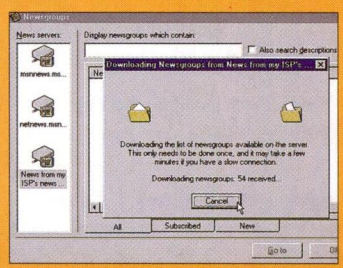
5 Give the news server a name that makes sense to you.



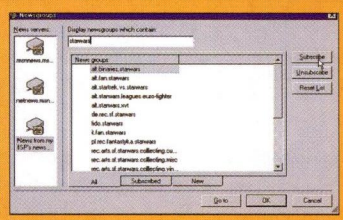
6 Tell Outlook Express that you will dial your ISP manually before you start reading news.



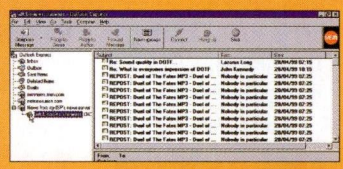
7 And you're done! You have now set up a newsgroup access account. Now let's see how to use it.



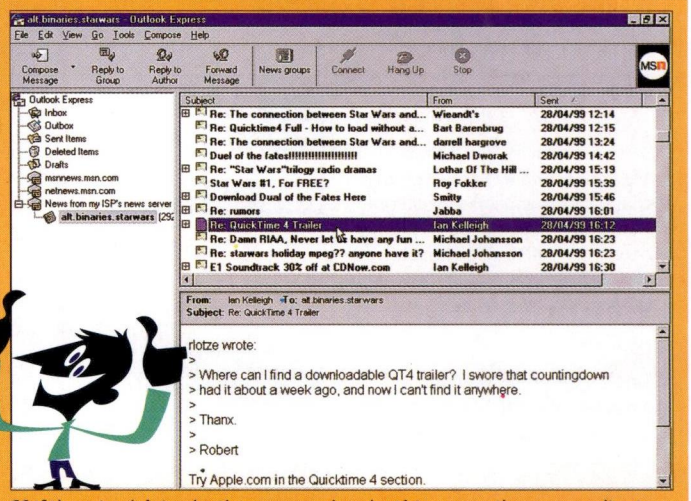
8 After hitting Close, you're asked if you want to download your ISP's list of newsgroups. When you click Yes, the list will be downloaded – so make sure you're online. This can take up to 10 minutes when you first connect to your news server because you are downloading the names of thousands of newsgroups.



9 Once all the newsgroups are downloaded, you can explore. If you want to find *Star Wars* postings, for example, type 'starwars' into the text field at the top of the window to display all newsgroups containing that word. You can subscribe to as many groups as you want.



10 To access a message inside a newsgroup, click on the subject header to read a summary. Double click the header and the whole message downloads, appearing on the lower half of the screen.



11 If there is a '+' sign by the message header this means there are replies to this message which you can also read. Click on the '+' sign to list the replies.

Online chat

Stuck at home on a Friday night with nobody to talk to? Then here's how to find a friend online to natter with

What is online chat?

Online chat lets you communicate with others – often in real time. In other words, you type in comments, send them over the Net and they're seen almost immediately. And you're only paying for a local phone call – even if the person you are 'talking' to happens to be on the other side of the world.

What does it let me do?

- 'Chat' with friends and relatives in other countries without running up massive phone bills.
- Join in an online discussion with an expert on your favourite subject.
- Ask a celebrity questions during a moderated 'conference'.
- Talk randomly to people on the other side of the world.

DON'T PULL THAT FACE ROUND HERE

'Smileys' are a way of including some indication of emotion in your messages. They are useful when, for example, you are making a joke and you want to be sure that the person at the other end of the line realises you're not serious. Hang a relevant smiley on the end of your sentence by typing in the relevant characters – but do try not to over-use these things. To 'read' them, just turn the page 90 degrees to the left ;-) OK? Here are the four most used smileys:

- :-) The original smiley. Indicates a joke, or just a happy person!
- ;-) Wink
- :-o Shock (an open mouth)
- :-(Unhappy

BEGINNER'S TIP

Don't register your details unless you really want to

Often chat software will ask you for your name, and sometimes other info. Be wary about giving this; you don't know what they'll be used for.

INTERMEDIATE TIP

Be careful out there

If you are looking for romance online, be careful. As you would with press ads, let someone know where you're going if you meet up.

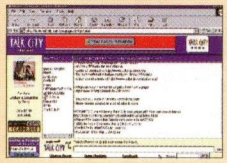
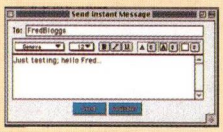
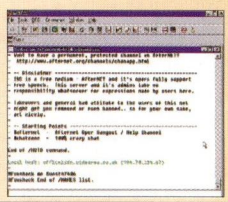
ADVANCED TIP

Go one step further

If text chat seems a bit flat, try 3D chat, where users take on a 'persona' and actually walk round chat rooms. Try ***www.thepalace.com*** for starters.

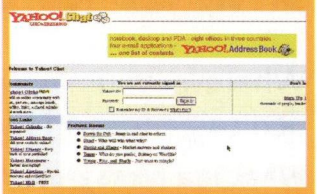
What kinds of Internet chat can I try?

There are several programs and methods for chatting online. It can get a bit confusing, so let's look at the main options

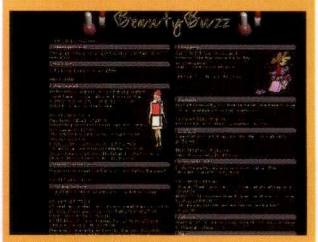
TYPE OF CHAT		FOR & AGAINST	CHAT LINK
LIVE ON A WEB SITE This kind of chat takes place within the window of your browser on a Web site. Everything you type in can immediately be seen by the other people viewing the Web page – and everything anyone else types in can be seen by you.		**FOR** Easy to use; no extra software required to run it. **AGAINST** Works on someone's Web site, so the subject will be dictated by them and private chat is unlikely.	***www.talkcity.com*** Online community where you can talk on various subjects, including romance and current affairs.
MODERATED SESSIONS Moderated chats are 'supervised' by a chat room host. In other words, you type in your message and a person sitting at the other end of the line decides whether or not to allow your comments or questions to be displayed. This is the norm for celebrity chats.		**FOR** Discussions are sensibly run. Plonkers may be screened out. **AGAINST** Only take place at certain times because they require a moderator to be present on the site. Censorship...	***chat.beeb.com*** The BBC's celebrity chat service with daily visits from the network's top stars.
REAL-TIME USING EXTRA SOFTWARE Software such as AOL's Instant Messenger and ICQ allow you to chat with other people in real time – either a group of people together, or one-on-one. You don't use a Web browser; dedicated software takes care of everything for you.		**FOR** Instant response; you can chat privately to one person. **AGAINST** Requires extra software; some firms don't allow this to be installed on their PCs, so you may not be able to chat at work.	***www.aol.co.uk/aim*** ***www.icq.com*** Chat one-to-one with your friends in real time on the Net. AOL's Instant Messenger and ICQ software are two of the most popular.
IRC This is Internet Relay Chat. It's a way of talking to many people at once using special software. IRC software can be a pain to use, however – it was, after all, modelled on Citizens' Band radio.		**FOR** Useful, technical chats are often held on IRC channels. **AGAINST** Software is difficult to use; IRC users can be impatient with newcomers.	***www.mirc.com*** Although it can be tricky to get used to, mIRC is the best software for IRC chat. ***www.ircle.com*** IRC client for Macs.

CHAT ROOMS

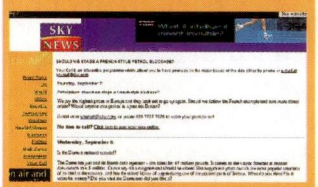
Want to have a yarn about some of the subjects you've read about in *the net* this month? Try these



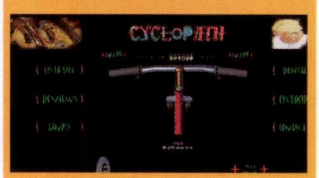
uk.chat.yahoo.com
Chat about anything that takes your fancy in Yahoo's chat rooms



www.beautybuzz.com/chat
Discuss those crazy catwalk creations here



www.sky.com/news/newsroom/
Chat online or submit questions live to presenters



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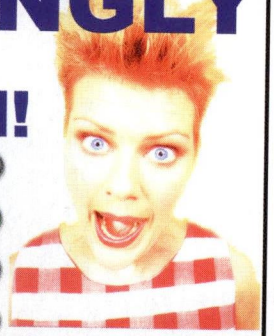

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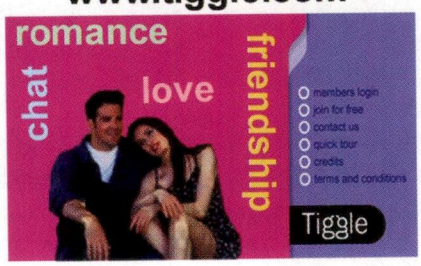

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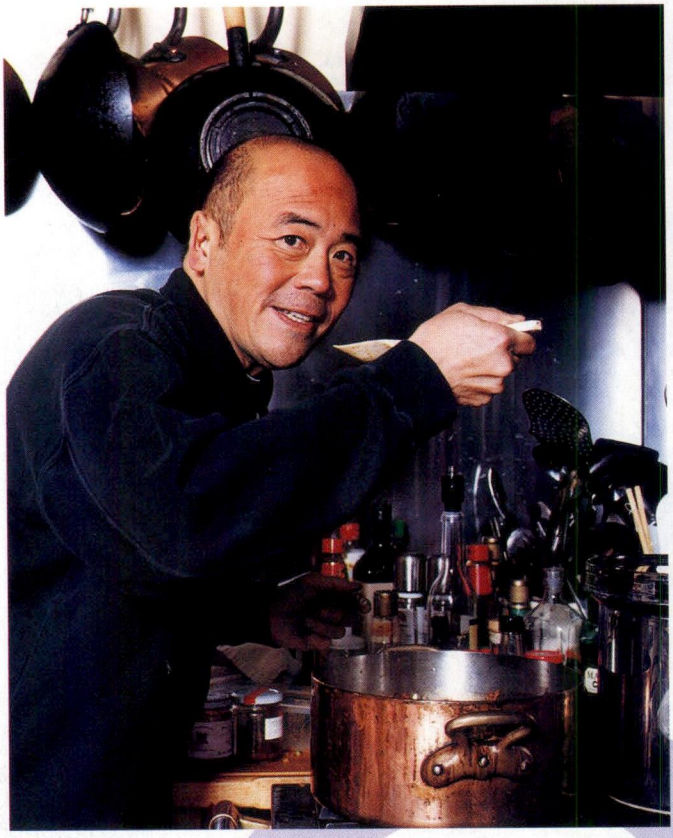
KEN HOM

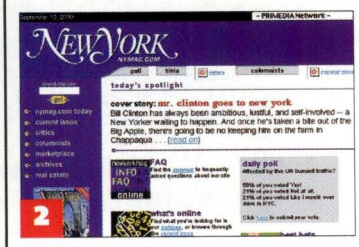
The celebrity chef who put the wok on the map in the UK reveals his browsing habits



When did you start using the Internet?
About four years ago.
What do you use it for?
Mostly for email; I travel a great deal and I'm in contact wherever I am in the world with email.
Does it help you in your work?
Yes, I can send my manuscript for my books, as well as recipes for my sous-chef to test.
Have you ever bought food online – and that includes fresh food?
I haven't yet, but I am sure that I will do soon. The area that I live in, in the South of France, isn't quite up-to-date with delivery yet, so I still mainly use the market.
How involved were you in the Foodoo site?
Very. I chose and amended all of the recipes in order to make them easier and quicker. I helped design my own pages, as well as helping to design the homepage. I also write features and respond to emails from users of the site who have questions.
Do you think recipes on the Net will replace cookbooks?
I don't think you can replace something tangible and beautiful like a cookbook. The Net, however, enables you to search a wide area with speed and efficiency. Using Foodoo to search for a recipe is like searching through a library of cookbooks from the world's best cooks. Our statistics show that the majority of our users log on between 6-7 pm – looking for something to cook for dinner. You will soon be able to search on Foodoo by specifics, such as dietary requirements. At the moment, you can type in a couple of the ingredients that you have to cook with and find a number of recipes.
Have you ever found a recipe for something you wanted to cook on the Internet?
Obviously I know my own recipes inside out. The other day, however, I was cooking with a friend and we were looking for a British dessert; we logged on to Foodoo and had a look through Gary Rhodes' and Gordon Ramsay's recipes.
Who's your favourite cook/chef?
Rick Stein, because of the simple no-nonsense way he prepares food.
Finally, is there any truth behind the myth that once you've had a Chinese meal, you always want another one a half-hour later?
Yes, because it is fairly light and the protein content is rather low. Without dairy products, Chinese tends to be less rich. In fact, we Chinese are eating all the time!

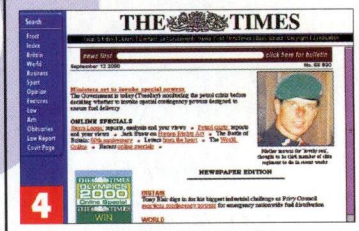
KEN'S BEST OF THE WEB

1 FOODOO.COM *www.foodoo.com*
He may be a bit biased, seeing that he's one of this site's contributors, but Foodoo's easy-to-navigate site does put a bit of fun in food preparation.



2 NEW YORK MAGAZINE
www.newyorkmag.com
Growing up in California, it's no surprise that Ken likes to keep abreast of what's happening across the pond. This site combines shopping, travel and entertainment news with fine American journalism.

3 FT.COM
www.ft.com
The popular chef has surely reaped the benefits of his many books, restaurants and TV shows by now; so where better to keep an eye on his investments than with *FT*'s adept site, featuring the latest market news.



4 THE TIMES
www.the-times.co.uk
American-born and now residing in France – Hom throws a British flavour into the mix with the addition of *The Times*' equally worldly, easy-to-use online publication.

5 SALON.COM *www.salon.com*
Since it's launch in 1995, this award-winning online mag has attracted millions of readers with it's slightly satricial, highly witty news articles.

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Jonathan Davies' top tips
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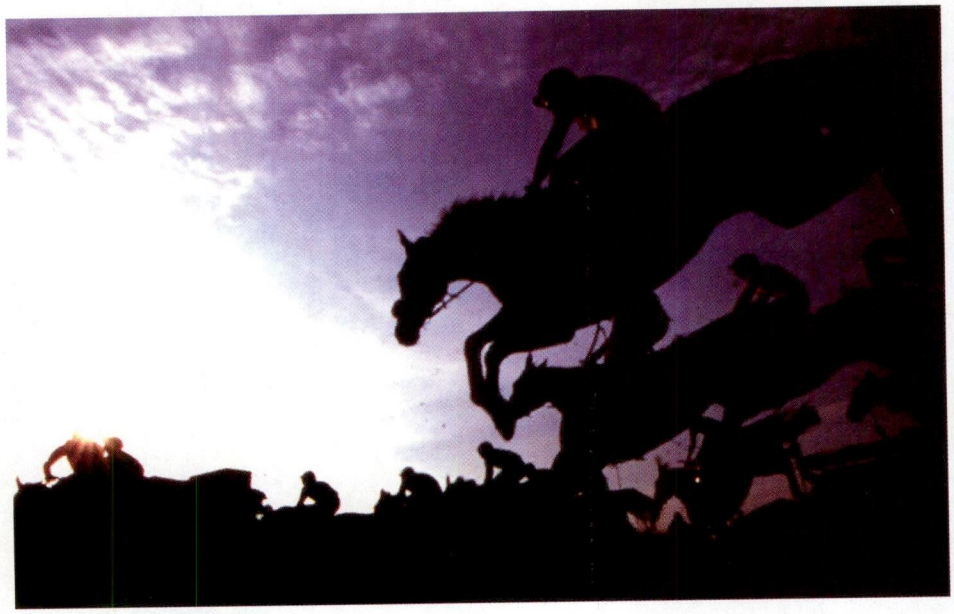
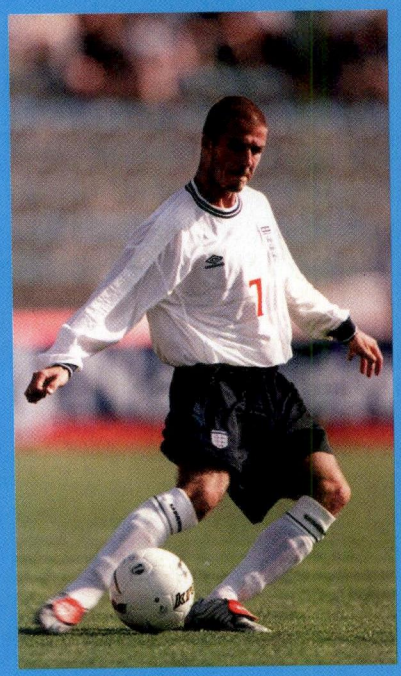


JUMP START

Where are the world's fastest growing hedges? Answer: on racecourses, the day before the start of the National Hunt season. The Murphy's Gold Cup at Cheltenham on 11 November and the Hennessey Cognac Gold Cup at Newbury on 25 November are the pre-Christmas standouts. **firststake.com** doesn't pin you down to the usual dull old each-way flutter. Try the 'Irish double' - an Irish-trained horse to win both races; the 'Pipe Dream' - Martin Pipe to train both winners; or the 'Topweight Double' - top weight runners to win both races.

JUMPERS FOR GOALPOSTS

What's going on with England? Even Mystic Meg couldn't have predicted the worthy draw our boys carved out against France in Paris. With Gerrard, Beckham, Scholes and Barmby looking like a serious midfield unit there's real hope for the 2002 World Cup. But who'll be the striker? Coles? Owen? Sutton?? firststake.com's resident guru Big Ron Atkinson gives you the inside gen on England's chances in the rest of the qualifying stage. What about a bet on France scoring a unique treble - World Cup, Euro and Olympic titles?



VENUS RISING

Her first professional coach knew she was special when she walked on her hands and did backflips off the tennis court. She practiced on cracked courts in an area of LA plagued by drug dealers and drive-by shootings. She turned pro at 14 after winning every junior event she entered. Now, at the ripe old age of 20, Grand Slam queen and Wimbledon champion Venus Williams is talking of retiring at 26 to become an architect, a clothing designer (she already has her own label), a clothes store owner - or an astronaut. Martina Hingis, whose no. 1 world ranking is under serious threat from Williams (3), won't mind either way. Watch the girly sparks fly at the WTA Tour's $2m indoor Chase Championships in New York (13 Nov). Then it's Australia v Spain in the Davis Cup Final (8-10 Dec). Both teams mullered their semi-final opponents 5-0, so the final outcome's hard to call. Watch **firststake.com** for one smashing service.

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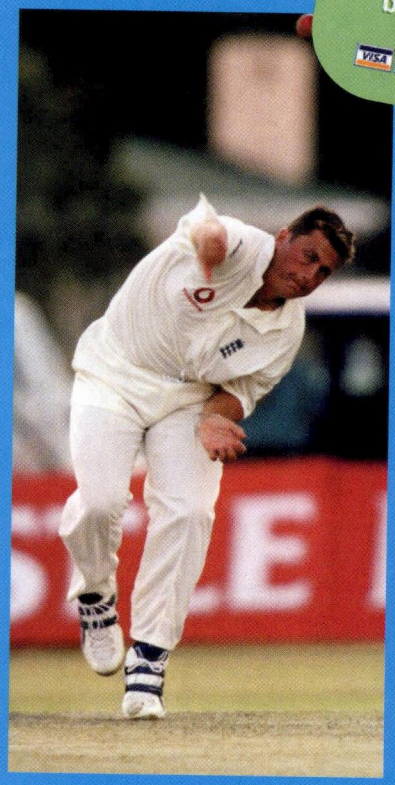
ENGLAND'S EASTERN PROMISE?

After the gloriously unexpected 3-1 duffing-up of the West Indians this summer, England's cricketers approach their winter tour with a new sense of self-belief. But the strength of Pakistan (world ranked 5th) and Sri Lanka (2nd) plus huge, stoked-up crowds will make this a tough challenge for 4th-rated England. The tour kicks off with a one-day tourney starting on 24 October, steaming up the atmos to flashpoint for Test 1 against Pakistan on 15 November. In Inzamam-ul-Haq and Yousuf Yohanna, Pakistan have the world's top two ranked batsmen; Sri Lanka's Muralitharan tops the bowling averages. But we've got Goughie (right) - now the world's sixth best bowler and rapidly becoming an inspiration in the Botham mould. Docile wickets could see big scores: take a punt on England to score 600 or over in any Test innings, or firststake.com's 'You're The Man' bet - any England player to score a double century in a Test. Go large on a historic double: England to win both Test series this winter. Or go cynical - England to score 100 or under in any Test innings. Oh ye of little faith.



AUTUMN/ WINTER EVENTLINE

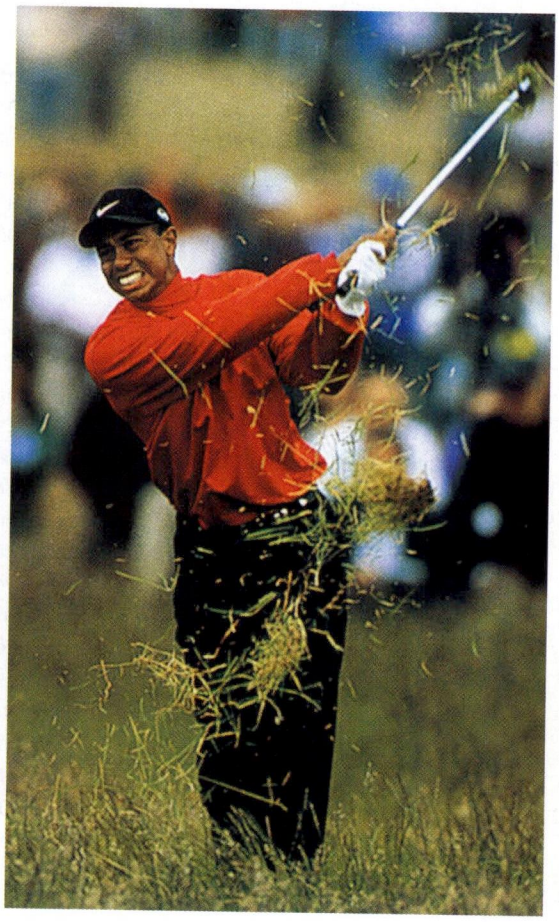
SNOOKER – ex-world no. 1 John Higgins aims to head off a nasty hat-trick - he's lost in the Final of the Regal Masters (24-29 Oct) for the last two years.

GREYHOUND RACING – £50K for a dog? Yep, that's how much you can pay for a winning greyhound. Bet on one instead, at Walthamstow's Stow Marathon (16 Dec).

DARTS – Take your pint pot and silk shirt out of the wardrobe and stride up to the oche for a feast of darts action. With the Embassy World Professional offering record prize money of more than £200,000 at Frimley Green in January, can Ted Hankey wipe away the opposition?

EAT MY CUTTINGS

You've got to marvel at the golfing phenomenon that is Tiger Woods. He now holds the record for low score in relation to par for each of the four majors: 18 under in the Masters, 19 under in our Open, 18 under in the PGA, and 12 under at the US Open, where his 15-shot victory broke a 138-year-old record for the biggest winning margin. No wonder Woods now commands the same sort of awed respect on the world's fairways as Iron Mike once did in the ring: the scary difference being that the 24-year-old Californian is getting better. He says he hit one perfect shot at the US Open - 'the rest were just misses that avoided disaster.' Which raises the prospect of a fascinating bet: when will he score the first sub-60 round in a major? That's a Holy Grail for golf, the equivalent of a three-minute mile, but if anyone can do it, Woods can. firststake.com will be covering all European Tour and US PGA Tour events. There's a driving range-sized selection of betting options available, from Tournament Group or Match betting to 3-Ball, 2-Ball or outright betting.

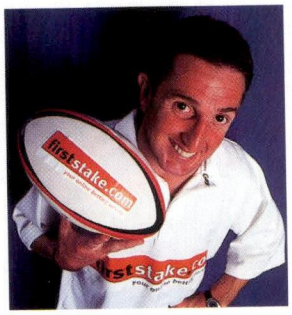


SPORTS USA

AMERICAN FOOTBALL
One day after last season's Super Bowl, the Washington Redskins were quoted at 20/1 to win this year's renewal. Then abrasive owner Daniel M. Snyder unloaded a mind-boggling $100 million on new players. The public backed them down to 4/1 favourites to land the prize. To the bookies, they're the Dreadedskins. Can they live up to their pricetag - or will the St Louis Rams steal their thunder? Follow all the NFL action with firststake.com.

BASEBALL
All New York is agog over baseball's World Series Championship, with the Big Apple's two Major League teams - reigning champions Yankees and aspiring Mets - looking hot for the play-offs and maybe delivering the dream 'subway series', so called because fans can zip to both home and away games by train.

NASCAR WINSTON CUP
With races like the 'Pop Secret Microwave Popcorn 400' and real-life drivers Rusty Wallace and Dick Trickle, America's NASCAR series epitomises the fast, dangerous and totally bonkers nature of US motor racing. Rock up to the thrilling series conclusion with firststake.com.



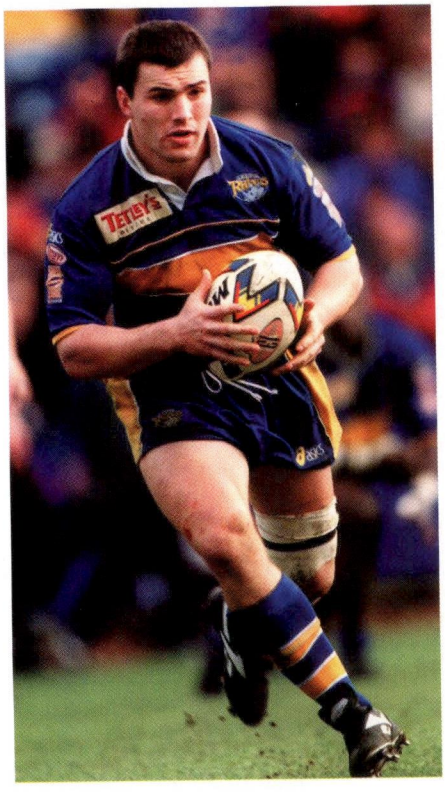
scrum DOWN
JONATHAN DAVIES

Want to know what's happening in the world of Rugby? Here's our own expert and Rugby legend Jonathan Davies MBE to give us the muddy lowdown.

Hold on to your seats - there's some excellent Rugby about to burst onto your screens, with the new kingpins to be decided at the Rugby League World Cup and a benchmark test for the current England and Scotland sides as the Rugby Union World Champions Australia arrive on our shores.

So, what's going to happen?

Kicking off with Rugby League, we're in for a terrific World Cup with high quality play and real talent guaranteed to be on show.



Iestyn Harris: best League player in Britain?

Letting it slip: firststake.com punters get the benefit of Jiffy Davies' matchless insider knowledge

My pick for the tournament crown has to be Australia, not just because of captain Brad Fittler but also because of the fantastic performances of Andrew Johns, surely the best player in the world at the moment. New Zealand are bound to be very strong too, with players like Stacey Jones and Joe Vagana in the squad.

The home sides? The **firststake.com**-sponsored England team looks like a good bet, but much will depend on the performance of their three most influential players: Andy Farrell, Shaun Long and Adrian Morley. I think they have a strong chance of reaching the final, and then - who knows?

They could just swing it.

So what about Wales? Well, for my money Iestyn Harris is the best player in the British Isles right now, but he's in a transitional team with a lot of young players who may be too new to give Iestyn the platform he needs.

My heart says that Wales can still do it, but I'll probably be keeping my hand in my pocket for the moment.

Want an outside bet? Try Lebanon. Many of their stars play at the highest level in Australia. And you can always rely on Samoa and Tonga to give the big names a fright.

On to Rugby Union now. I'm always asked about the gap between Northern and Southern hemisphere teams. Up to now the gulf has been clear for all to see.

But England's performances in South Africa have shown how much that gap has shrunk. England's back room management is now first class, and the team looks fit and fast. In my opinion they should really have won both games against the Springboks.

Can they upset Australia? I think so. Keep a close eye on the **firststake.com** odds.

Scotland have had a tough time on their recent visit to New Zealand, but they too are fielding a transitional team. Many of the younger players will now have had the opportunity to learn and play at the highest level; they'll be better prepared for Australia, and should give them a tough time, but I can't see them snatching a result.

That's all for the moment, but do check out the **firststake.com** web site for my updates on the Tri-Nations, Barbarians tour, Rugby Union Premiership, European Cup and Super League - and of course on the Six Nations, starting Feb 5.

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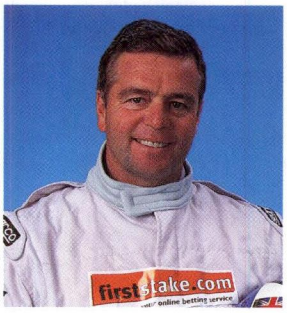


right GEAR
DEREK WARWICK

Who's the greatest? Former World Sports Car Champion and Grand Prix star Derek Warwick gives you the firststake.com inside line on F1.

Buttoned up: Jenson's move to the 2001 Benetton/Renault could be the spark that lights up his career

The 2000 F1 season has been a classic three-horse race between defending world champion Mika Hakkinen, Ferrari's Michael Schumacher and McLaren's David Coulthard, with the Scot unluckily losing out at Monza. But who is most likely to be in pole position again next season?

I've always been a bit sceptical about David. On his day, DC can be one of the fastest drivers in F1. You only have to look at his races at Spa in the past and Magny-Cours this year to see just how committed he can be. I think we will see some more exceptional performances from David this year, and he can certainly rack up more wins, but incidents like stalling at Montreal make me question his mental strength. A great driver, yes: but a World Champion? I'd have to say no.

Mika's case is different. You have to look at what the guy's been through. Two long World Championship campaigns won at the eleventh hour, plus all of the promotional duties that he has to endure each closed season as the World Champion. Halfway through the 2000 season, he definitely looked tired.

Then Mika proved what a class act he is by bouncing back in great style for the final third of the 2000 season. Only a fool would rule him out for 2001.

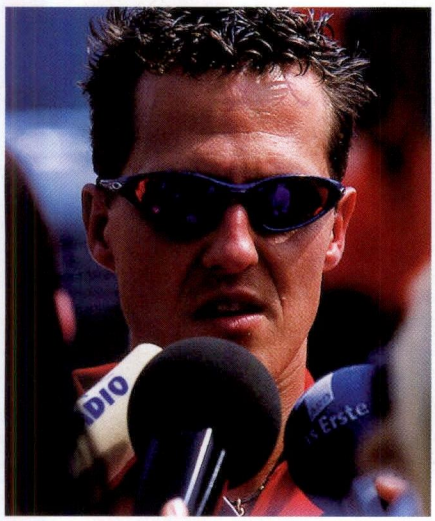
But my money is still on Michael Schumacher to be World Champion again, in both 2000 and 2001. In my opinion he is by far the best driver in the current field.

Is he the greatest ever? That's an impossible call. Who can say how much more winning drivers like Senna still had to do? But Michael's still driving, and still winning. He could easily end up being the most successful driver in history.

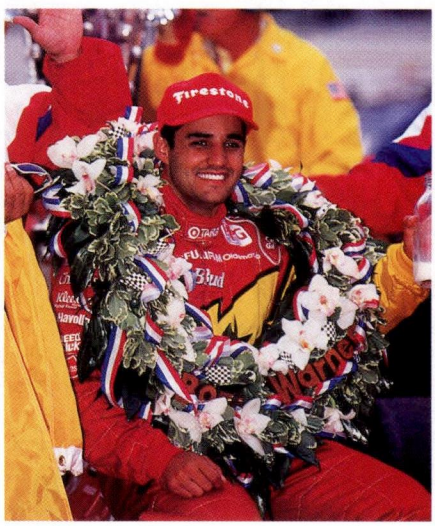
Of the other drivers, if I was setting up a team and Mika and Michael weren't available, I'd pick Ralf Schumacher. He's still a dark horse for a result this year. If autumn weather arrives and a wet race is on the cards, keep an eye on Ralf's firststake.com odds.

Fisichella and Trulli are also excellent drivers and should keep racking up the points, but on the whole I do question the quality of the current field. In the '70s, '80s and '90s there was strength in depth: most of the drivers, given the right car, were more than capable of winning. I sincerely believe that's just not the case in the modern 'rent a drive' era.

So, for the moment Michael reigns supreme, but there's one cloud on his 2001 horizon: Juan Pablo Montoya. US motorsport people think he's the best they have ever seen - and he's taking over **Jenson Button's** Williams seat for the '01 season. Bet early for the best odds.



Testing, one two three. Or just one.



Montoya's your man for '01

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But there's so much more to the website **firststake.com** than 'quick-click' betting. There's tons of sports news and information from our seasoned team of sports writers, and exclusive contributions from our sports experts including Rugby legend Jonathan Davies, former World Sports Car champ and F1 driver Derek Warwick, and a soccer guru who needs no introductions, Big Ron Atkinson.

The service is simple to hook up to, easy payment methods include most of the major credit and debit cards, and there are no worries because our system is secure.

And if you're still unsure or just want to ask a question, you can make a quick call to our experienced and helpful team at the **firststake.com** customer service centre on 0800 9150915, seven days a week.

But don't take our word for it - visit **firststake.com** where you're guaranteed at least a £5 win on your first bet! Just check the website for details of how you can win £5 cash back if you spend £5 on a bet. Go on. Be lucky!

SO WHO ARE firststake.com?

firststake.com is a personal online sports betting service that will add a new and exciting dimension to the pleasure of following all your favourite teams and events.

The site combines hot information, celebrity interviews, features and articles in its exclusive sports news service.

Bristol-based **firststake.com** is owned by Firststake PLC, which has over 14 years' experience of running one of the UK's top independent betting shop chains. For **firststake.com** a new high-quality team has been assembled, blending consumer, internet and sports expertise in one unit.

firststake.com is on track to develop into a global service aimed at sports fans throughout the world. However, the company is UK based, allowing customers visiting the **firststake.com** site to be confident that they are dealing with a company which is regulated by the tough, internationally respected UK betting laws.

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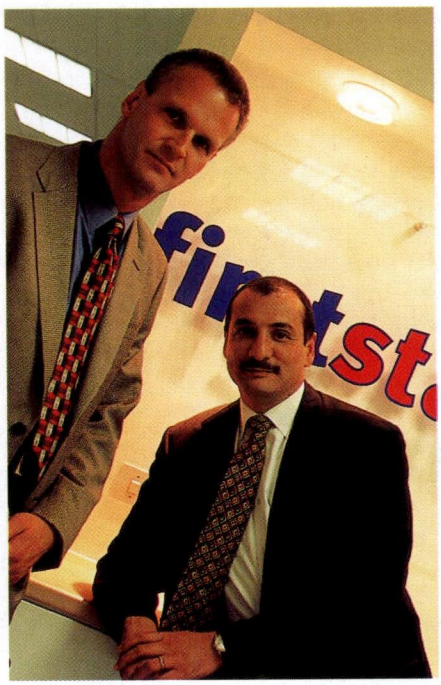

The impressive firststake.com nerve centre, with director Simon Grieve (left) and chairman Karim Ghaidan

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pure GOLD
RON ATKINSON

The team that finishes above Manchester United will win the Premiership, says firststake.com's soccer pundit Ron Atkinson.

United will be there or thereabouts at the end of the season, and it will take an almighty effort by someone else to beat them. The only weakness, if you can call it that, is their shortage of world class centre halves. If they had someone like Italy's Fabio Cannavaro to partner Jaap Stam, they would be the complete team as far as I'm concerned.

Both Chelsea and Arsenal have strengthened their squads in the summer, but they may take a bit of time to settle. Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink will give Chelsea a cutting edge up front, but there are doubts about the future of some of their other stars like Flo and Zola.

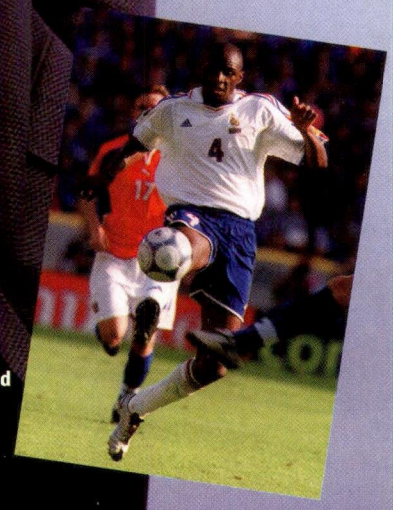
Arsenal have brought in some more French players and I do rate Robert Pires. I think Arsenal underachieved last year and should have been much closer to United.

This year might be a transitional one for the Gunners as their back five, which has been their foundation for previous successes, is being broken up. For me, the bottom line is that if any side is above Man Utd at the end of the season, they will be champions.

As for relegation issues, I believe the promoted sides will again struggle to survive, but I expect Charlton to stay up at the expense of sides like Bradford who just managed to avoid the drop last season.

So how will the Premiership big guns fare in Europe this season? Well, I think United and Arsenal - apparently moving back to Highbury for their home matches after the unsuccessful Wembley experiment - will both do well, but Leeds United might struggle to make an impact. They're still a very young team and the experience will be valuable, but I don't think they will go that far this season.

What I also believe is that there will be a revival in Italian fortunes following the disappointment of the national side in Euro 2000. Lazio, Juventus and Inter Milan should all figure in the latter stages of the competition.



Gallic dread: Patrick Vieira came into the 2000 season - and went out of it - with a bang.

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